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Issue 178

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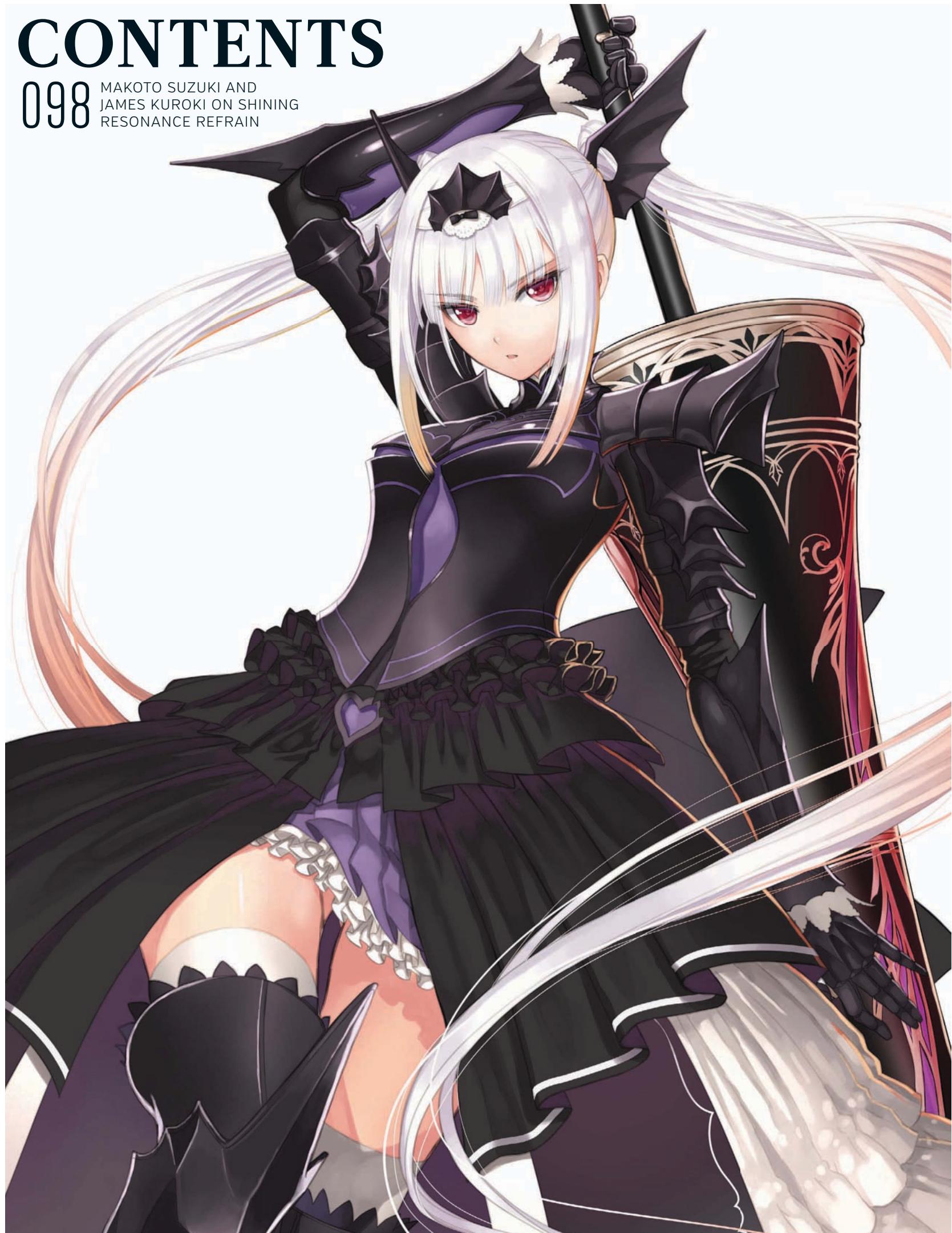
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CONTENTS

098

MAKOTO SUZUKI AND
JAMES KUROKI ON SHINING
RESONANCE REFRAIN



008



045

Photo by Eddie of Food and Cosplay



REVIEWS

- 038** DRAGON BALL SUPER PART 4
- 064** THE THIRD MURDER
- 064** SUSHI STRIKER: THE WAY OF SUSHIDO
- 068** BIG FISH & BEGONIA
- 069** HARVEST MOON: LIGHT OF HOPE
- 069** MARIO TENNIS ACES
- 069** SUFFERING OF NINKO
- 070** WOMAN IS THE FUTURE... / TALE OF CINEMA
- 071** FOOD WARS SEASON 2
- 071** DIGIMON ADVENTURE TRI. 5: COEXISTENCE
- 072** LOVE, CHUNIBYO AND OTHER DELUSIONS RIKKA
- 072** THE ASTERISK WAR PART 1
- 074** OCCULTIC;NINE PART 2
- 074** SWORD ORATORIA
- 078** INITIAL D LEGEND 3: DREAM
- 080** ANIME ROUND-UP
- 082** DETECTIVE BUREAU 2-3: GO TO HELL...

062



030



056

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Turn to page 54 for more details!



CONTENTS

FEATURES

008 SUMMER SHOWS

Don't go outside. Stay in with our bounty of entertainment!

056 SHOJI GATOU

David West interviews the man who created Full Metal Panic!

062 RETRO GAMING

What's behind the appeal of golden oldies?

076 DONNA STARLING COSPLAY

Top tips on creating your own costumes from a Final Fantasy pro!

098 SHINING RESONANCE REFRAIN

Makoto Suzuki and James Kuroki on the Shining franchise's return to the west

LIFESTYLE

025 MAHIRU'S PAGE

Visit Tokyo's power spot with our resident pop idol!

034 J-LIFE

Adam Miller looks back on a decade in Japan

036 MANGA SCHOOL

Ruth Keattch on the art of hatching

044 COSPLAY STAR

Jessienoochiescosplay shows off some amazing costumes

046 ARTIST SHOWCASE

Meet the cover illustrator for our manga extract this issue!

060 COSPLAY CORNER

Incredible photography from Eddie of Food and Cosplay

NEW IN JAPAN

030 TOKYO GHOUL:RE

Untangle the web of stories and find out about the latest instalment of Ken Kaneki's tale...

032 GOLDEN KAMUY

Go back in time to look for gold in Japan's northern island of Hokkaido; fighting bears, hunters, and hordes of bandits

040 MANGA SNAPSHOT

Jonathan Clements shakes his head sadly at Stupid Woman's Black Betrayal

REGULARS

006 EDITORIAL

Meet the team behind this issue of NEO magazine!

016 NEWS NETWORK

Events, new releases, music charts, gigs, premieres and more: all the latest from the world of Asian entertainment

022 RELEASE LISTS

Up to date information about new anime, manga and Asian film releases

066 COMPETITION

Win an amazing collector's edition of Flip Flappers from MVM Entertainment

086 MANGA

Meet the team behind Her Impact! and read an extract of the story



WELCOME

WELCOME TO issue 178 of NEO! This issue we're saying goodbye to our Man in Japan, Adam Miller, who has written for the magazine for four years now! Time flies when you're having fun, right? And it's certainly been fun reading about Adam's exploits, from his love of Japanese whisky, to Halloween antics with yokai, and even taste testing street snacks at Inuyama festival. Still, all good things come to an end, eventually. But that's not the end of our J-Life section, of course! Make sure you grab issue 179 to discover who is picking up the pen to continue to write about all the good (and the bad) things about living in the Land of the Rising Sun!

Also in these pages, Jake Boniface investigates the hot new shows coming out from UK distributors over the summer, so that you can spend all day inside and make your friends and family complain about how you're missing out on sunburn, ants, being rained on, and getting sweat patches in places that have no business getting damp. Head to 008 for some top excuses to trot out when someone asks you if you'd like to go camping up a mountain surrounded by sheep and fog.

If you're not allergic to sunshine and having fun outdoors, though, you might be interested in our cosplay sections this issue! Attractive people in the sunshine: what's not to like? Head on over to pages 044 and 060 for some lovely photos, and check out our top cosplay tips for making your own costume, over on page 076!

Until next time!

GEMMA COX, EDITOR

MEET THE TEAM

DAVID WEST



"I survived the recent heatwave primarily by lying on the floor and whimpering. I was excited to interview Shouji Gatou for this issue

as I've really been enjoying the car chases and shoot outs of *Full Metal Panic! Invisible Victory*."

ALEX JONES



"I've been excited for a new season of anime but what I'm really hyped for is *Ultraman R/B*. I love my Japanese superhero shows and it's been fantastic to have Crunchyroll simulcasting the franchise for the past few years."

MITCHELL LINEHAM



"New anime is beginning to air and *Hanebado!* is shaping up to be great, and *Octopath Traveler* is finally here!

Outside of games I've been writing a fiction novel, and that's been very exciting."

EMILY VALENTINE



"With companies like Nintendo releasing new versions of classic consoles, it's a great time to explore the world of retro games, and speak to people in the industry to get their opinions about the golden age of gaming."

ADAM MILLER



"I'm handing the reigns of the J-Life column over to a good friend and a great writer. It's been an amazing four years and I will miss working with the great team at NEO magazine. Hopefully I will see you all in Nagoya soon!"

JONATHAN CLEMENTS



"I was fascinated to hear that Steve Alpert, formerly of Studio Ghibli, had published a tell-all memoir, but only in Japanese. I suspect his main fear for publishing in English was making Disney look stupid, or possibly Harvey Weinstein look smart!"

ANDREW OSMOND



"I reviewed the end of *Occultic;Nine* this issue. I may be biased as it's largely set in Tokyo's Inokashira Park (practically next to the Ghibli museum) which I love - though the show's nasty events are hardly the best advert for it!"

JAKE BONIFACE



"Been avoiding the heat and the football this month by getting into some new summer anime! Check out my feature on some of the best new stuff coming out over the next few months. I'm most excited for the new *Eureka Seven* movie!"



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12

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PS4



STEAM

SQUARE ENIX



ANGELIC LAYER

A classic series from back in 2001, *Angelic Layer* is also getting a re-release from Anime Limited this summer! The series follows a plucky young heroine new to the world of battling angelic and robotic dolls in a popular new game, and features animation from powerhouse studio BONES, as one of their earliest works!

SCORCHING NEW SHOWS!

Summer is here again, and it never hurts to have an anime series or ten on hand in case of a sudden (or inevitable) rainstorm! Jacob Boniface delivers your guide to the hottest anime summer no matter what the weather.

KICKING OFF THE season is a blazing hot action series – MVM’s *The Asterisk War!* The show has already gained itself a cult following, likely owing to its frequent and frenetic battles. *The Asterisk War* follows anime everyman Ayato Amagiri, a precocious teenager on the hunt for his older sister who vanished without a trace some six months ago. His only lead is the Seidoukan Academy, a prestigious school that his sibling was attending prior to her disappearance. While discovering his sister is Ayato’s main reason for being at the academy, he soon finds himself embroiled in a series of supernatural duels, owing to the superpowers that he shares with the rest of the student body.

Years before the events of the series, a planet-wide natural disaster known only as ‘Invertia’ destroyed most of modern society as we know it, but also gave rise to seemingly-magical abilities, the recipients of which became known as ‘Genestella’. As one of the Genestella, Ayato’s place at Seidoukan means that he’ll have to compete in martial matches against other students to raise his standing, and maybe even qualify for the Phoenix Festa – a combat tournament between the six schools in the city of Asterisk. Though Ayato has little interest in fighting – at least to begin with – the promise of finding his sister might just be too great to resist, as the victor of the tournament will receive anything in their schools’ power to grant them. Of course, Ayato isn’t the only one vying for that much sought-after honour, as it seems like every student at the academy wants to be the one to secure victory for their school. One of the most likely contenders is Julis-Alexia Von Riessfeld, a talented young princess whose relationship with the newcomer Ayato gets off to a rocky start on

the latter’s very first day of school, in slapstick anime style.

Though the series has now been brought to the screen by A-1 Pictures, the famed studio responsible for creating such hit series as *Blue Exorcist* and *Black Butler*, *The Asterisk War* had a long life in other formats before its animated adaptation. The franchise began as a series of light novels, penned by author Yu Miyazaki. Although having started out in 2012, the novel series is still running to this day, which is great news for any new fans of the anime, as it looks like there could well be fresh episodes of the series for some time to come! Indeed, not only will this summer see *The Asterisk War*’s first release on 6 August, series two will be getting a release later in the year, with the next dozen episodes of Ayato’s adventure coming out at the beginning of September!

SPEEDY AND SEETHING

But if you’re looking to spend some time this summer with something a little more down to earth, why not check out this month’s release of the third *Initial D Legend* movie? Also coming to us from the folks over at MVM, the *Initial D Legend* series is an updated retelling of the classic shonen story that first wowed audiences back in the ‘90s, which still holds up today with its street-racing underdog story.

A series that has inspired creators and audiences alike since the original run of its manga and subsequent anime adaptations, *Initial D* tells the tale of Takumi Fujiwara – a seemingly mild-mannered delivery boy who possesses a preternatural instinct for driving that makes him one of the most talented street racers in Japan. While the first two films in this new series – titled >>>



SCORCHING NEW SHOWS!



1. Before there was *The Fast and the Furious*, there was... *Initial D*. If you wanted an anime with lots of cars, this is probably it. 2. Also, lovely scenery! Very underrated in racing shows.

AOHARU X MACHINEGUN

Hotaru is a tomboyish young high schooler with a passion for enforcing justice. Unfortunately, it's that same passion that sees her getting coerced into playing 'The Survival Game', a faux-combat sport that Hotaru develops a newfound love for. But to see whether her natural talent will let her win the day or not, you'll just have to check out the *Aoharu x Machinegun* series collection, when it's released on 27 August!

>>> *Awakening* and *Racer* – chronicled the beginnings of Takumi's entry into the world of racing, this third installment introduces viewers to a committed competitor who has fully awakened to his skills, and his love for burning up the tarmac! But while Takumi's rivals up until this point were certainly talented drivers in their own right, they're merely small fry when compared to Ryosuke Takahashi, the undefeated leader of the Akagi RedSuns, and Takumi's next opponent. Whether or not Takumi's newly awakened racing techniques will be enough for him to prevail this time remains to be seen, but one thing's for sure – there'll definitely be some twists and turns along the way!

As mentioned, the *Initial D* franchise has a long history, from Shuichi Shigeno's original manga that started in 1995 and ran for nearly 20 years to these present iterations of the story. As well as previous anime adaptations, the series has also spawned an acclaimed live action movie version, not to mention countless video games that allow players to get behind the wheel of some of the series' most iconic vehicles and take on the challenges of its most memorable races.



Even with so many additions to the *Initial D* world, it doesn't seem like the franchise is showing any signs of slowing down – while this trilogy of movies draws things to a close, there's still so much more of Takumi's journey for twin studios Sanzigen and Liden Films to sink their teeth into, so it seems likely that more feature-length speedfests will be on their way! Like the previous two movies, *Dream* is being directed by Masamitsu Hidaka, a veteran director and storyboard artist who cut his teeth on shows as diverse as *Pokémon*, *Gundam Wing* and *Haikyu!!*, so if you loved the last movies' fast-paced thrills, you can expect to be completely on board with this chapter as well!

SAFETY LAST

If you're still after some automotive action to while away those balmy days and nights, then August's release of the *Bakuon!* series collection has got you covered! Set in a light-hearted world that apparently doesn't have any vehicular safety laws, *Bakuon!* follows students of Okanoue High School, an all-girls academy that permits its students to ride motorbikes to





Eureka Seven



Bakuon!



Bakuon!

"SET IN A LIGHT-HEARTED WORLD THAT APPARENTLY DOESN'T HAVE ANY VEHICULAR SAFETY LAWS, *BAKUON!* FOLLOWS STUDENTS OF OKANOUÉ HIGH SCHOOL, AN ALL-GIRLS ACADEMY THAT PERMITS ITS STUDENTS TO RIDE MOTORBIKES TO SCHOOL."

school, as well as taking part in the school's motorcycle club, which protagonist Hane Sakura quickly becomes a part of. Having made some firm friends in the equally gearheaded members of the club, Hane's new challenges to overcome are to actually buy – and learn to ride – a motorbike, not to mention the other weird and wacky situations that the girls seem to get themselves into every episode. Though the girls of the motorcycle club have a shared love of anything with an engine and two wheels, they are also a pretty diverse bunch of eccentric characters, which leads to no end of antics both on and off the asphalt!

Bakuon! is another series that began life as a manga, one that continues to run even now, but it wasn't until a short OVA for the series aired that it started to get itself the thriving fanbase that it has now, with a full animated series soon getting commissioned off the back of the two-episode feature that came bundled with the manga's seventh volume. Akita Shoten, the publishing company behind the original manga, also quickly put into production a pair of spin-off mangas, entitled *Amano Onsa no Nikoichi Hanjoki* and *Suzunoki Rin no Yabou*. The pair began serialization just a couple of months ago, each in a different manga magazine, each focusing on

a different character from the series, but with all the fun and speed of the original series! And if the Okanoué High Motorcycle club keeps expanding at this rate, who knows? We may even see full animated series for each one of its cute and quirky members in the coming years!

STRANGE BONDS

Kiznaiver is another hotly-anticipated series seeing a home release later this summer as well, after having already been incredibly well received in both its original and dubbed forms, which were simulcast online by streaming service Crunchyroll, who also co-produced the show. A multimedia project that included the series itself and a simultaneously-published companion manga, *Kiznaiver* follows the eponymous group of supposedly unconnected people known themselves as 'Kiznaivers', who have the mysterious ability to share each others' pain, be it emotional or physical! While the Kiznaivers are a diverse group who would have ordinarily had no cause to get to know each other, their involuntary shared experience leads to them forming bonds with each other, even as they investigate the mysteries between their abilities in the futuristic city of Sugomori. **>>>**

EUREKA SEVEN

Without a doubt one of the cult hits of the 00s, *Eureka Seven* did mecha action with a kind of heartfelt flair the likes of which had never been seen before! Now the *Hi-Evolution* series is bringing Renton and Eureka's story to a new generation of fans with a trilogy of feature-length retellings, the first of which will be available from 27 August!

SCORCHING NEW SHOWS!



DRAGON BALL SUPER

Dragon Ball Super has been going from strength to strength, and the fourth collection of episodes looks set to be no different! A calamity from the future brings time-traveler Trunks back with a warning yet again, but what foes await the Z in their oncoming timeline?

GITS:SAC

One of the biggest series in the world, *Ghost in the Shell* has certainly earned its place in the anime hall of fame! And so the franchise's cavalcade of fans will be overjoyed to hear that the prequel series, *Stand Alone Complex* will be getting a full re-release of both seasons this summer!

"IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO SPEND SOME TIME THIS SUMMER WITH SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE DOWN TO EARTH, WHY NOT CHECK OUT THIS MONTH'S RELEASE OF THE THIRD *INITIAL D LEGEND* MOVIE?"

>>> As mentioned, the series was an instant hit on its initial release in 2016, and it's not difficult to see why, when you look at some of the talented names attached to the project – with a plot penned by well-known anime screenwriter Mari Okada, character designs by *Dogs*' author Shirow Miwa, and the series director Hiroshi Kobayashi having previously worked on episodes of such series as *Kill La Kill* and *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*.

If the series has passed you by up until now, however, this summer is the best time to give it a look, especially with the two brand new collector's editions being published by Anime Limited! In addition to the full series in both Japanese and

English dubbed versions, the standard collector's edition boxset comes with an illustrated hardcover case and artbook, while the online-only exclusive collector's edition includes all that, as well as yet another artbook containing 116 pages of various illustrations from the series, making it the perfect choice for any of the series' legions of fans!

Hopefully there should be something in this list to get you all fired up for a bunch of new series, but this is really just the tip of the iceberg for the huge amount of new series and movies that are dropping this summer! So as always, keep an eye on the pages of NEO for all the hot news and verdicts on each of these titles as they come out! ●





SOUND! EUPHONIUM

Sound! Euphonium is a series that has been a runaway success in Japan, with the original novels giving life to two seasons of anime and four movies! This summer, UK fans will get a chance to get to know this plucky high school orchestra when the series' first collection is released!



//COMING SOON
DIGIMON ADVENTURE
TRI.- CHAPTER 5:
COEXISTENCE

DISTRIBUTOR: MANGA

Out on 30 July from Manga Entertainment is the latest instalment of the *Digimon Adventure tri.* movie series; *Chapter 5: Coexistence*. The stakes are high as an enraged Meicoomon is out of control and the destruction of the real world looks imminent. A massive face-off is in order, but it looks like there will be heartbreak for the Digidestined. With fascinating themes, and far-reaching consequences, this fifth silver screen adventure is one for the fans!

LOVEBITES

BATTLE AGAINST DAMNATION

The ferocious new EP from Japan's power metal heroines

WINNER: BEST NEW BAND
- Metal Hammer Golden Gods 2018



See them live:
10 August: Bloodstock Open Air



JPU
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GET YOUR GAME ON

Move over Sonic! SEGA prepares an onslaught of gangsters, Army Rangers, post-apocalyptic warriors, martial arts experts and fabulous dancers!

There are lots of videogame goodies on the way from SEGA in the rest of 2018 and into 2019. *Yakuza 2* was a big hit on the PS2 back in 2006 and now SEGA is updating the game for the PlayStation 4 in the guise of *Yakuza Kiwami 2*. Due out on 28 August, the title features the same open world format as the original but with a host of new mini-games, as well as making Goro Majima available as a playable character in addition to the main storyline involving Kazuma Kiryu coming out of retirement to defend the Tojo Clan.

25 September sees the release of *Valkyria Chronicles 4* on the PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch. Set in a world analogous to Europe during WWII, the set-up sees Claude Wallace leading his Ranger Corps on Operation Northern Cross against the forces of the East European Imperial Alliance. In addition to the familiar character classes of Commander, Shocktrooper, Sniper, Scout and Medic, VC4 introduces the new Grenadier class who can bombard the enemy with mortar fire.

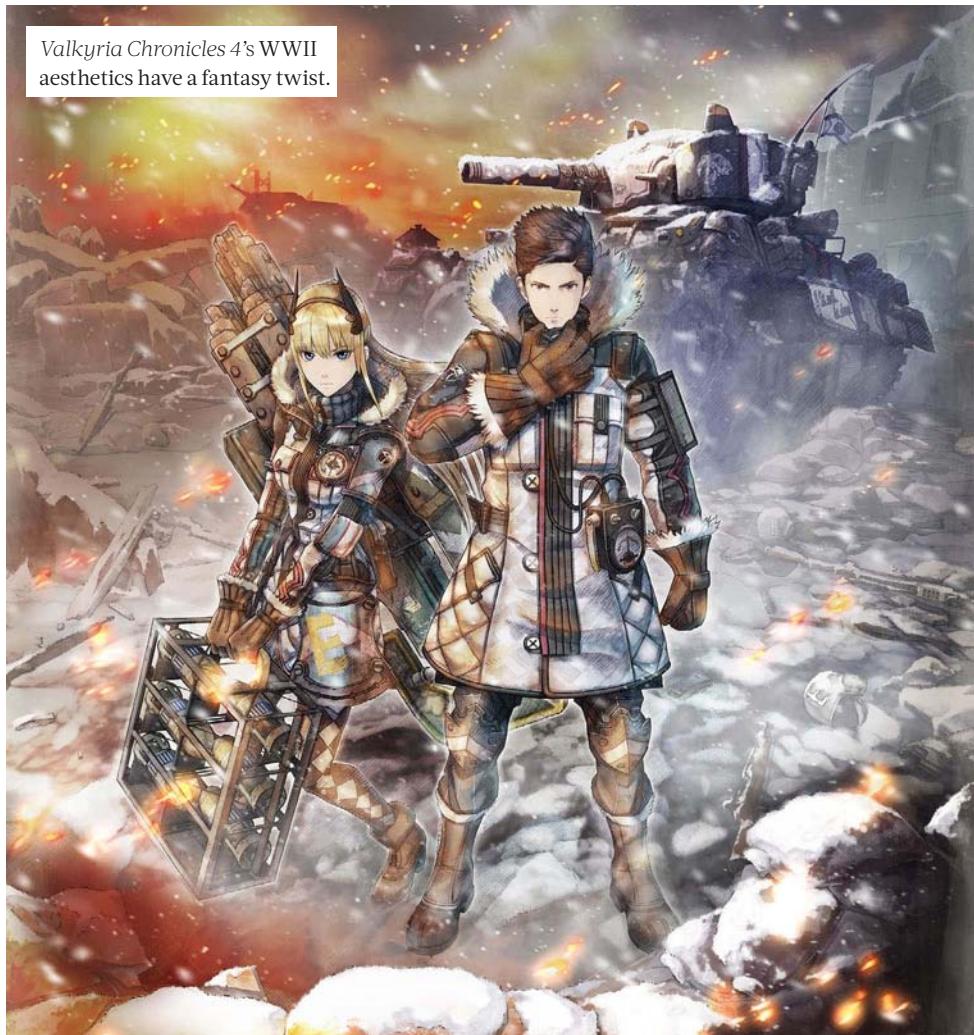
Heads will explode on 2 October with the release of *Fist Of The North Star: Lost Paradise* on the PlayStation 4. Expect the franchise's trademark blend of heavily muscled men in very tight trousers, insane violence and *Mad Max* aesthetics as Kenshiro searches for his love Yuria in the city of Eden. Kenshiro can explore Eden or head out into the desert that surrounds the city, with gameplay modelled on the *Yakuza* series, just with way more blood and gore.

Originally released on the Dreamcast in 1999, *Shenmue* was the brainchild of Yu Suzuki, the man behind *Virtua Fighter*. It's the story of teenage martial artist Ryu Hazuki searching for his father's killer. Now

Shenmue and the 2001 sequel *Shenmue II* are getting an update for the PlayStation 4, PC and Xbox One. Due out 21 August, *Shenmue I & II* contains both titles with English and Japanese dialogue options and boasting all the playable mini-games within the games, alongside the 3D combat and open world exploring as Ryu seeks his revenge. Meanwhile, having been announced in 2015, *Shenmue III* still remains in development.

The *Persona* series is a flagship RPG title for developers Atlus, but the franchise is limbering up to get its groove on in 2019 with the release of *Persona 3: Dancing In Moonlight* and *Persona 5: Dancing In Starlight*, following in the fancy footwork of 2015's *Persona 4: Dancing All Night*. Both the new titles will be rhythm games that should take roughly ten hours to clear, and there will be a wide range of customisable costumes for the cast. These will include outfits from *Virtua Fighter*, *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Yakuza*, so that the Phantom Thieves can look their finest as they shake what their mamas gave them.

The games feature music by Shoji Meguro and Ryota Kozuka alongside brand new remixes from the likes of Atols, tofubeats, Jazztronik, Lotus Juice, Hideki Naganuma, Tetsuya Kobayashi, and Kaien. Each song features a main dancer who will be backed up by one or two support dancers and when players max out the Fever gauge, the lead dancer will be joined by a partner for a duet. *Persona 3: Dancing In Moonlight* and *Persona 5: Dancing In Starlight* are currently in development for the PlayStation 4 and PS Vita for release next year. ●



NEO'S TOPTEN

Our roundup of the hottest tracks currently blasting on the office stereo

WORDS BY TOM SMITH

1 MIKU HATSUNE – IEVAN POLKKA 8 DECEMBER

Cultural phenomenon Miku Hatsune is heading to Europe for the first time later this year, and has a date in London booked in at Olympia on Saturday 8 December!

If you're not already familiar with this 16-year-old, blue-haired idol (where have you been hiding for the last few years?!), what makes her special is that this chart topper isn't even human. She's a virtual persona who uses a computer-generated voice and 3D graphics to perform on stage. With a repertoire entirely provided by individual creators, she is the first truly crowd-created virtual idol, and she's managed to fill up venues across the globe and work with the likes of Lady Gaga and Pharrell Williams.

She'll be heading to the UK as part of MIKU EXPO, a tour that has so far included shows in the United States, Mexico, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesia and of course Japan. And now, for the first time, France, Germany and the United Kingdom too.

Unfortunately, those wishing to nab VIP tickets for the event have missed their chance as tickets sold out within minutes of going on sale. Standard standing tickets remain and are priced at £50 plus applicable fees and are available to buy now from Seetickets.com.

LONDON CONCERT!



Illustration by Sameyama Jiro © Crypton Future Media, INC.

NEW EP! FESTIVAL DATE!



2 LOVEBITES – BREAK THE WALL 10 AUGUST

Japan's metal maidens LOVEBITES were recently in London to attend the Metal Hammer Golden Gods Awards, where

they ended up taking home the award for Best New Band! While there they managed to rub shoulders with the likes of the prince of darkness Ozzy Osbourne, metal legends Meshuggah, and even sneak a selfie with guitar shredder Herman Li of DragonForce, amongst many others.

"We are so happy and very honoured to be receiving the Best New Band award. We know you only have one chance to get this. We would like to thank everyone who has supported us. Thank you so much!!" said LOVEBITES' bass player miho.

"We will be back in England in August to perform at Bloodstock Open Air and look forward to seeing you all again," added guitarist miyako. The band's brilliant new EP *Battle Against Damnation* is out now on CD and on digital platforms via JPU Records.

NEW ALBUM!



3 THE GAZETTE – THE MORTAL OUT NOW

Visual kei veterans the GazettE released their heavy hitting new album *NINTH* a few days ago and it's already managed to dominate charts across Japan and Europe! Over here it's been selected as one of HMV's recommended metal releases and can be found in their new and trending section. It's been a huge success digitally too, landing in the top ten of 18 European countries' iTunes Rock charts, including the UK – and topping seven!

It's the first full studio album from the band in over three years and sees the GazettE return to their roots with a distinctive rock sound that doesn't go quite as extreme as their previous outing in *DOGMA*. The CD edition of the album includes lyric translations and transliterations exclusively for the JPU Records release. New music video *Falling* is also out now on the band's official YouTube channel.

EXCLUSIVE ALBUM!



FESTIVAL DATES!



NEW SINGLE! NEW LONDON DATE!



8 HATENKOHRO – 3369 14-15 JULY

Look, all you need to know about HATENKOHRO is that they mix traditional Japanese sound with heavy rock, and they have members of the band whose official job title states "stage combat", and another as "baton flag" – what that entails we don't know, but we're excited to find out! Catch them at HYPER JAPAN on Saturday afternoon and Sunday. You'll find us down the front.

4 PASSCODE – MISS UNLIMITED THIS SUMMER

PassCode have announced an exclusive overseas compilation album, due this summer via JPU Records. At the moment no further info is available, but the group, produced by the drummer of My First Story, made the announcement simultaneously with news of their biggest Japan tour so far. We saw them live in Tower Records in Shinjuku last year where fans caused a mini riot the moment the first song began. We were going to choose new single *Ray* for our chart this issue but seeing as a compilation album is on the way, we delved into their back catalogue for *MISS UNLIMITED*.

6 ROA – USHISM 13-14 JULY

Shamisen punk rockers are hitting HYPER JAPAN on 13 and 14 July ahead of a headline date at The Underworld in Camden on 17 July. This exciting new band plays a style of music they've dubbed "Wayo Settyu" – literally meaning "the blending of Japanese and western styles". Formed by the drummer of Japan's legendary chart-topping ska-punk outfit SNAIL RAMP, ROA manage to propel their country's three-stringed traditional instrument, the Tsugaru-shamisen, into the 21st century by implementing its iconic sound in new and exciting ways. Overseas album *RODIAC* is out now for digital download / streaming and on CD.

9 YUKIKA – WELCOME TO JAPAN 13, 15 JULY

"Real rocking crazy girl" is how her own YouTube bio describes her, and after watching a few YUKIKA videos, it's a pretty accurate description! She writes and plays all her own songs, and makes quirky videos to them, like her *Welcome to Japan* vid. Her live show looks like it'll be packed with fun, so don't miss it at HYPER JAPAN when she performs on the Friday and Sunday of the event.

LONDON DATES!



5 RICH BRIAN – DAT STICK 11 JULY

Indonesian hip hop artist, producer, songwriter and viral star Rich Brian will be coming to the UK as this issue hits the shops. He'll be performing at the O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire in London on 11 July.

Video *Dat Stick* was released in February 2016 and put Brian on the map when it quickly went viral amongst the hip hop and rap community. The video contains plenty of F-bombs and guns, and to show just how hardcore Brian is, it even shows him wearing a pink polo shirt AND bum-bag – at the same time. Absolute gangster. If you like songs about being rich or being a Brian, look no further.

Tickets are on sale now priced at £23.75, plus fees.

7 HOTEI – RUSSIAN ROULETTE 20 OCTOBER

Actual guitar hero Tomoyasu Hotei is back for another performance in London. The man, responsible for inspiring a generation of guitarists in Japan, is probably best known in the west for his theme song to *Kill Bill*, entitled *Battle Without Honor or Humanity*.

Tickets are on sale now via Ticket Master. Pricing starts at £31.95 for level 2 and 3 seating, while tickets for the rest of the venue are priced at £37.60. Tickets for the stalls (at the front) have almost sold out, so be quick!

NEW SINGLE!



10 DEADLIFT LOLITA – PUMP UP JAPAN 13-14 JULY

He's a former LADYBABY and full time LADYBEARD. The Aussie-muscles-in-the-tutu is back with his new crazy J-pop outfit DROPLIFT LOLITA, pitching him with Japan's own mega kawaii muscle machine Reika Saiki. They'll be at HYPER JAPAN, though just on the Friday and Saturday morning sessions. Make sure to get a spot early, his live show with LADYBABY a few years ago was hugely popular.

TROUBLES ANEW

JONATHAN CLEMENTS ASKS WHAT LINKS TIGERS, BUNNIES AND ZOMBIES...?

I don't imagine that this will be the last time this column talks about Cool Japan film financing boondoggles. It certainly isn't the first – way back in NEO 60 we discussed the likelihood of bail-out packages; then in NEO 63 there was all that hoo-hah over the proposed Media Arts Centre. We've followed Japanese studios as they tentatively embraced not only crowd-funding but also charity for their underpaid staff, and the gravy train of J-LOP funding for copyright holders.

But producer Hironori Masuda has just behaved in a decidedly un-Japanese way by blowing the whistle on what he calls the "institutional corruption" of Cool Japan. The subject of his ire is ANEW, a film fund announced with great fanfare in 2011, promising \$80 million for new projects. Recently rebuffed for a film funding application, Masuda followed the money trail, and discovered that there wasn't any cash to be found. ANEW had been sold off in 2017 to venture capitalists for just \$311,000, while all those millions injected into it to pay for movies had been frittered away on administrative salaries and dead-ends.

"ANEW HAD FIVE OR SIX FILM PROJECTS UNDER ITS AEGIS, INCLUDING A PUTATIVE LIVE-ACTION ADAPTATION OF THE ANIME *TIGER & BUNNY*, BUT NONE OF THEM HAVE COME TO FRUITION. THEN AGAIN, ISN'T THIS PRECISELY WHAT YOU EXPECT TO HAPPEN WHEN GOVERNMENT QUANGOS DABBLE IN MEDIA MANIPULATION?"

ANEW had five or six film projects under its aegis, including a putative live-action adaptation of the anime *Tiger & Bunny*, but none of them have come to fruition. Then again, isn't this precisely what you expect to happen when government quangos dabble in media manipulation? Cool Japan has always been a marketing-focussed, image-obsessed concept, in which officialdom has lumbered far beyond the real achievers, trying to reverse-engineer their success.

You can't just make a new *Pokémon* happen. If you could, Bandai would have already done it. Nor does Japan go for those tax-break film initiatives that so many countries have successfully parleyed into movie magic. There's a reason *The Walking Dead* films in Atlanta – they get massive tax breaks, as long as they come to Georgia to spend their money. But that doesn't work in Japan, where a tax break won't take away the language barrier or the red tape. Instead, the Cool



1. Tax breaks enticed *The Walking Dead* crew to Georgia. Shame about all those zombies... 2. Give us money and we'll invent a new anime to rival *Tiger & Bunny*. It's about a group of magical girls who can turn into waffles. The show's name is *Breakfast Babes*. Now give us a fiver.

Japan policy wonks tried to make Cool Japan happen by starting their own movie projects.

Some might say that Masuda is just sulking because he didn't get a piece of the pie, or that it was unrealistic all around for anyone to think that a mere handful of movie ideas might generate the next blockbuster. Regardless, after seven years, it seems that ANEW has absolutely nothing to show for all its investment, an amount of money that if spent more judiciously, could have paid for four *Spirited Aways!* Not even the Japanese government can create its own luck. ●



Gate Collection

Beware monsters on both sides of the gate!

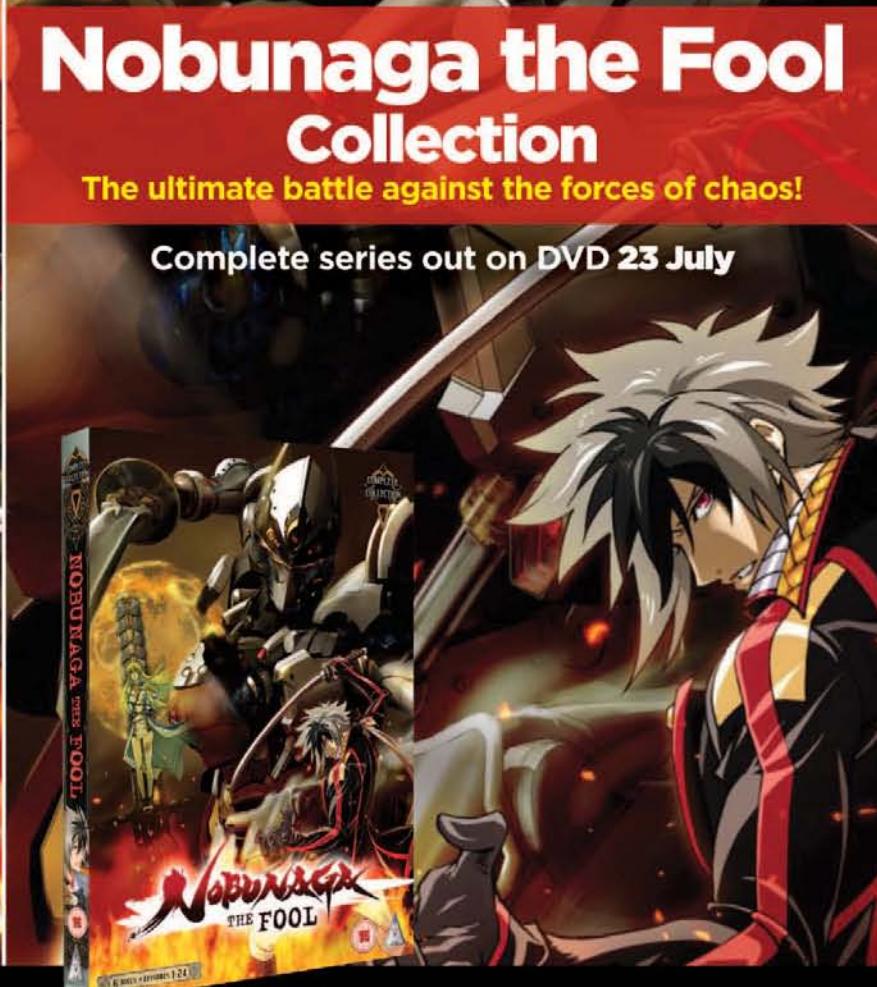
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UK release schedule



ANIME

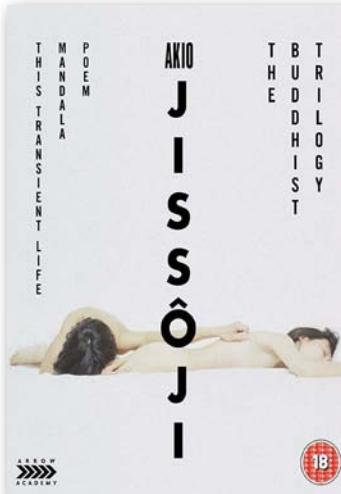
DATE	TITLE	DISTRIBUTOR
23/07	Sword of the Stranger [DVD, Blu-ray]	Anime Limited
23/07	Initial D Legend 3: Dream [DVD, Blu-ray]	MVM
23/07	Nobunaga The Fool Collection [DVD]	MVM
30/07	Lu Over The Wall [Collector's combi, DVD, Blu-ray]	Anime Limited
30/07	Shinkai Twin Pack [DVD, Blu-ray]	Anime Limited
30/07	Sword Art Online II: Part 3 [Blu-ray]	Anime Limited
30/07	Love, Chunibyo & Other Delusions! The Movie: Rikka Version [DVD, Blu-ray]	Manga
30/07	Digimon Adventures Tri 5 [DVD, Blu-ray]	Manga
06/08	Dragon Ball Super Part 4 [DVD, Blu-ray]	Manga
06/08	GIT:SAC [DVD, Blu-ray]	Manga
06/08	Asterisk War Part 1 [DVD, Blu-ray]	MVM
13/08	Food Wars! Season 2 [DVD, Blu-ray]	Manga
13/08	Flip Flappers Collector's Edition [DVD]	MVM
13/08	Fate Stay Night: UBW Part 1 [Blu-ray]	MVM
20/08	Naruto Shippuden Box 33 [DVD]	Manga
20/08	One Piece [Uncut] Collection 18 [DVD]	Manga
20/08	Sword Art Online II: Part 4 [Blu-ray]	Anime Limited
20/08	Bakuon! Collection [DVD, Blu-ray]	MVM
27/08	Aoharu x Machinegin [DVD, Blu-ray]	Anime Limited
27/08	Eureka Seven: Hi-Evolution Movie 1 [Collector's combi, DVD, Blu-ray]	Anime Limited
27/08	K: Missing Kings [Collector's combi, DVD]	Anime Limited
27/08	JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Diamond Is Unbreakable [DVD]	Manga
27/08	Sword Oratoria [Combi Collector's]	MVM



MANGA

DATE	TITLE	DISTRIBUTOR
26/07	Bleach 73	Shonen Jump
26/07	Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba 1	Shonen Jump

DATE	TITLE	DISTRIBUTOR
26/07	Dragonball Super 3	Shonen Jump
26/07	Haikyu!! 25	Shonen Jump
26/07	Kaguya-sama: Love is War 3	Shonen Jump
26/07	My Hero Academia Vigilantes 01	Shonen Jump
26/07	Naruto 3-in-1 Edition 23	Shonen Jump
26/07	One Piece Color Walk [3-in-1 Edition] vol 1	Shonen Jump
26/07	One-Punch Man 14	Shonen Jump
26/07	Rurouni Kenshin 3-in-1 Edition 7 [vols 19, 20, 21]	Shonen Jump
09/08	Fire Punch 3	VIZ Media
09/08	Pokémon Adventures Black 2 & White 2: 2	VIZ Media
09/08	The Water Dragon's Bride 6	Shojo Beat
09/08	The World's Greatest First Love 10	Sublime
09/08	Vampire Knight: Memories 2	Shojo Beat
23/08	Anonymous Noise 09	Shojo Beat
23/08	Black Clover 12	Shonen Jump
23/08	Black Torch 1	Shonen Jump
23/08	Case Closed 67	VM Shonen Jump Advanced
23/08	Children of the Whales 5	VIZ Media
23/08	Dead Dead Demon's Dededede Destruction 2	VIZ Media
23/08	Food Wars 25	VM Shonen Jump Advanced
23/08	Fullmetal Alchemist: Fullmetal Edition 2	VIZ Media
23/08	Haikyu!! 26	Shonen Jump
23/08	Homestuck 2	VIZ Media
23/08	Jojo's Bizarre Adventure Part 3 Stardust Crusades 8	VM Shonen Jump Advanced
23/08	Kenka Bancho Otome vol 2	Shojo Beat
23/08	Kuroko's Basketball 2-in-1 Edition 13	Shonen Jump
23/08	Magi 31	VIZ Media
23/08	My Hero Academia 14	Shonen Jump
23/08	One Piece 87	Shonen Jump
23/08	Platinum End 6	Shonen Jump



ASIAN FILM

DATE	TITLE	DISTRIBUTOR
20/07	The Receptionist	Munro Film Services Ltd
23/07	Hansel & Gretel	88 Films
23/07	The Third Murder	Arrow Academy
23/07	The Human Condition	TrilogyArrow Academy
23/07	Suffering Of Ninko	Third Window Films
27/07	Detective Dee: The Four Heavenly Kings	Cine Asia
30/07	Pacific Rim Uprising	Universal Pictures
06/08	Street Mobster	Arrow Video
13/08	The Vengeful Beauty	88 Films
13/08	Iris: The Movie	88 Films
20/08	Police Story/Police Story 2	Eureka
27/08	Akio Jissoji: The Buddhist Trilogy	Arrow Academy
27/08	The Liquidator	Cine Asia
13/09	Bloody Spear At Mount Fuji	Arrow Academy
17/09	Horrors Of Malformed Men	Arrow Video
24/09	A Prayer Before Dawn	Altitude Film Entertainment
24/09	Ciao Ciao	Matchbox Films

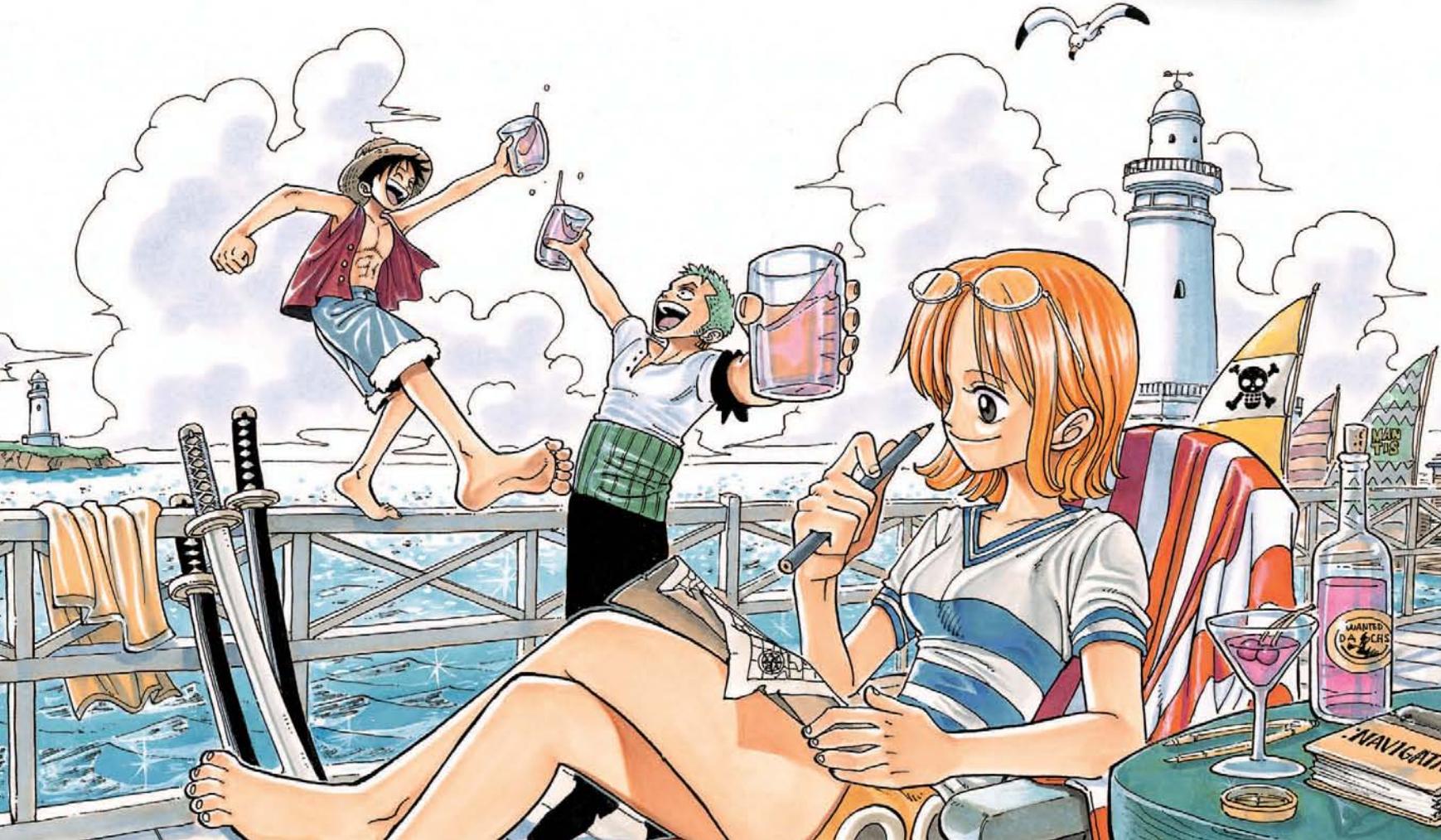
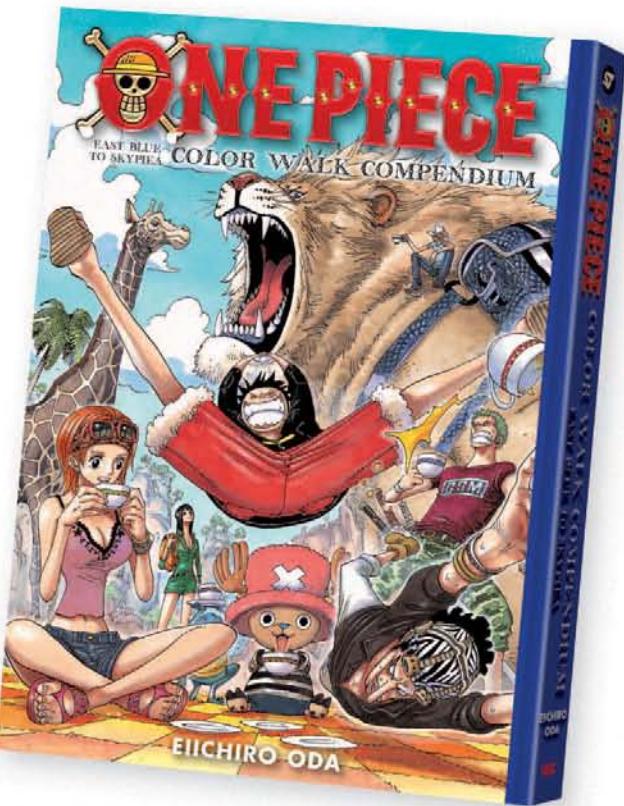
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JUMP AROUND

Celebrating 50 years of Shonen Jump!

2019 WILL MARK the 50th anniversary of *Weekly Shonen Jump*, the beloved manga that has given the world such classic titles as *Mazinger Z*, *Fist Of The North Star*, *Dragonball*, *One Piece* and *Naruto*. To celebrate the half-century, Bandai Namco has announced that next year will see the release of *Jump Force*, a new 3D fighting game featuring some of the biggest stars from the brand's history.

The full roster has yet to be revealed, but playable characters confirmed thus far are Goku and Frieza from *Dragon Ball Z*, Luffy and Zoro from *One Piece*, Naruto and Sasuke from *Naruto Shippuden*, and Ichigo from *Bleach* in his *Thousand Year Blood* War guise. Also set to make an appearance are *Bleach*'s Rukia and Aizen in an unrevealed capacity, plus Light and Ryuk from *Death Note*, although the latter two definitely won't be playable, as Light could kill everyone just by jotting down their name. However, they will be involved in the story that pulls all these heroes together.

The gameplay uses a three-versus-three tag team format, which is similar to *J-Stars Victory VS+*, while the locations for the slugfests will include real world settings such as New York City, Hong Kong and the Swiss Alps, alongside backdrops from *Jump World*. There's been one gameplay trailer released so far, which suggests that players will have a great deal of freedom to move around the combat stages during battles. *Jump Force* is due out next year for the Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and PC.



WARRIOR TOGETHER

Strike Like A Thunderbolt!

Featuring a staggering 170 characters from across the *Dynasty Warriors* and *Samurai Warriors* series, the upcoming one-versus-one-thousand action game *Warriors Orochi 4* may be the biggest, wildest entry in the long-running *Warriors* franchise yet. Famous figures from the Three Kingdoms period of China and Japan's Sengoku Era are thrown together when their worlds are unexpectedly merged into one. The figure behind this cataclysmic upheaval in the natural order is none other than the Lord of Olympus himself, wielder of the legendary thunderbolt, Zeus. For the first time in the *Warriors* franchise history, characters can unleash powerful Magical Abilities through the use of Sacred Treasures, divinely powered weapons that enable the casting of devastating spells. Smashing! *Warriors Orochi 4* will arrive on PS4, Xbox One, PC and Nintendo Switch on 19 October from Koei Tecmo.



AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!

Which heroes will answer the call?

More details are emerging for Bandai Namco's upcoming videogame based on the hit series *My Hero Academia*. The game now has an official title, *My Hero One's Justice*, and a target release month for this October. Players will control a team of three characters, with one primary fighter and two sidekicks acting in support roles. The gameplay boasts fully destructible environments and the action isn't confined to the ground, allowing characters to interact with buildings and walls. The roster will include Izuku Midoriya, Katsuki Bakugo, Tomura Shigaraki, as well as All Might, Eraserhead, Gran Torino, and villains like Muscular, Stain, Dabi, and Himiko Toga. *My Hero One's Justice* will be available for the PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch and PC.



HITTING TOKYO'S POWER SPOT!

RESIDENT J-POP IDOL MAHIRU KURUMIZAWA EXPLORES ASAKUSA

RECENTLY IT'S THE rainy season in Tokyo. We call this depressing period "tsuyu" in Japanese, but one good point is that the flowers are so fresh during this season!

Today I'd like to introduce you to a Japanese power spot! We use the word "power spot" to describe a location where you can feel in-tune with nature, elements or something spiritual. For example, we would call Stonehenge a power spot, as well as Uluru (Ayers Rock) in Australia. One such place in Tokyo is Asakusa!

I believe that Asakusa's Kaminarimon Gate is the symbol of Tokyo; it's the gate with the big red lantern. You can feel the atmosphere of the Edo-era and enjoy good old town Tokyo. In Asakusa, I went to a rental kimono shop called wargo.

I rented a kimono, an obi, shoes called "geta", a bag, and a hair accessory. Staff set my hair style and helped to fit me into the kimono (I had to squeeze my waist!). She tied the ribbon in the shape of a flower. They can make the ribbon in the shape of a flower, or heart or other beautiful shapes.

I only paid 4104 yen (around £28). It was soooo cheap! So you can rent traditional yukata (summer, lighter version of a kimono) or standard kimono (for all seasons and is a bit thicker).

The best thing of all is Asakusa shrine. Japanese visit this shrine within the first three days of the New Year. You can draw a fortune here and also worship.

Apart from visiting the shrine, I recommend a matcha ice cream shop in back of Sensoji shrine. This is a popular ice cream shop and has often been featured on TV. You can select the strength of the matcha up to strength

level seven! I chose strength level two as I'm a bit of a stranger to matcha, so only a slight taste is enough for me – it's great if you're new to matcha and don't want anything too strong.

You can try strawberry and tea flavour ice creams – and that's it! That's the only flavours this shop offer. Also, you need to be careful when you visit, as this place also closes at 5pm! And you need to be careful again because wearing a kimono is really tight around your waist. It makes you look beautiful when you stand straight, but it's also a little bit painful. Try and let me know how you get on (on Twitter @lunch_mahiru)! ●



WE LOVE THIS STUFF!

Check out NEO's pick of the coolest merchandise around this month



1



2



3

1. BONSAI TRIO KIT

Grow your own bonsai tree with this kit that includes silver birch, red maple and mountain pine seeds, along with growing pots, markers, and everything else you'll need. Grab it for £14.99 or less on Amazon.

2. OVERWATCH T-SHIRTS

This range of Overwatch tees are available online and in store from TokyoToys.com, priced at £18. And this is just the start of their new range of gaming merch!

3. NOVELTY MONOPOLY

Check out Amazon for a massive range of novelty Monopoly sets, including a Nintendo version, a Junior set featuring *Yokai Watch*, plus sets themed on *Adventure Time*, *Transformers*, *Pokémon*, *The Legend of Zelda*, and Hull. One of these is not like the others...

4. SHARK TANK TEE

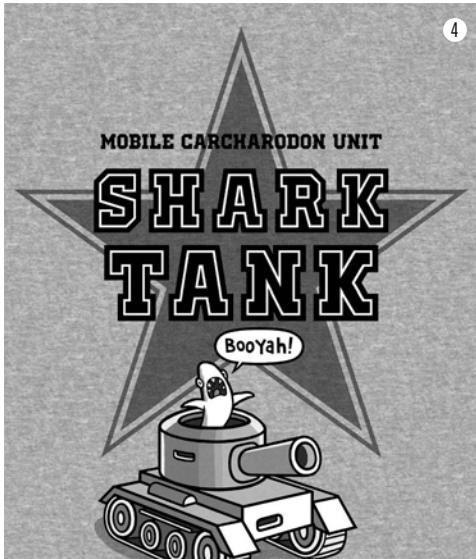
We love this hilarious new design from GenkiGear.com, available now priced at £17 on ladies and unisex tees or on vest tops!

5. KOKICHI OMA DEFORMED FIGURE

Releasing in September is this *Danganronpa V3: Killing Harmony* Kokichi Oma Deformed Figure by Union Creative, available for £60 from www.rawckz.com. Shipping for orders over £50 is free!

6. NARUTO / KURAMA KIZUNA FIGURE

Preorder this amazing *Naruto Shippuden* figure, out February 2019. Part of the KIZUNA relation series, this 21cm statue is available from animemegami.co.uk.



4



5



6



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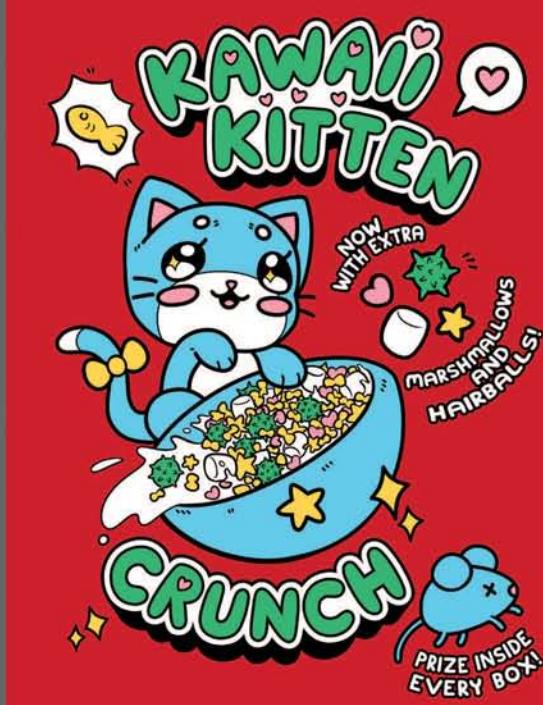
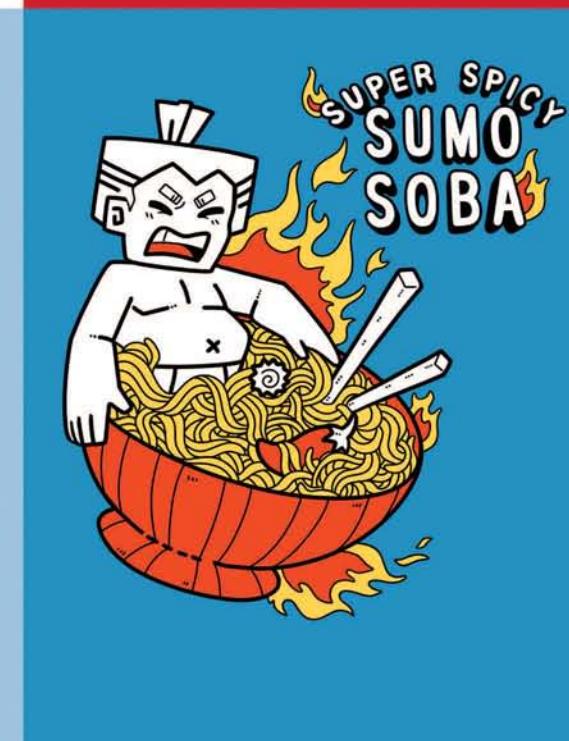
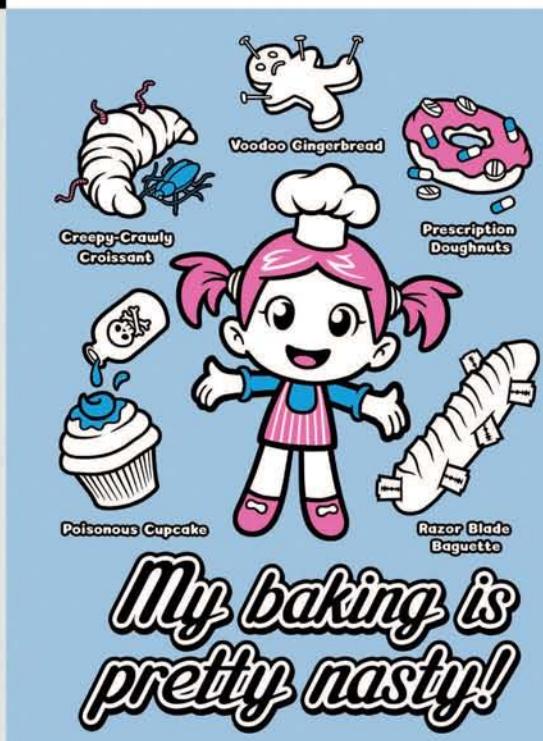
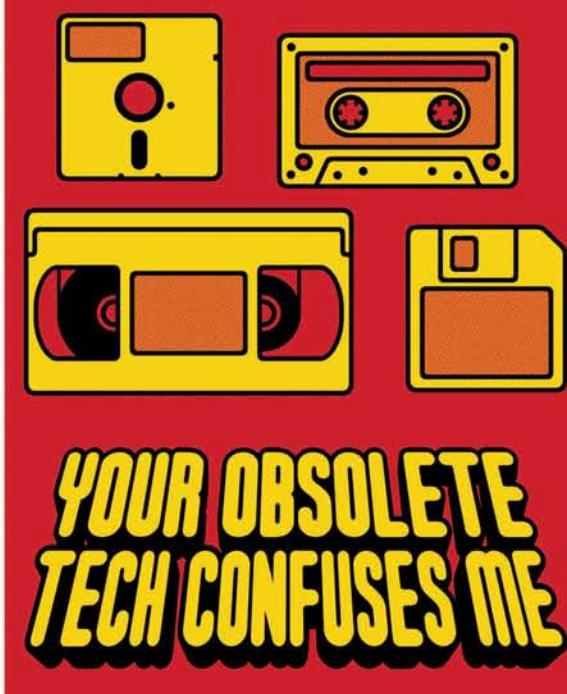
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OUT: 20TH AUGUST DISTRIBUTOR: EUREKA

In news sure to have action fans slavering in anticipation, August sees the arrival of a double-bill of Jackie Chan classics on Blu-ray. 1985's *Police Story* and 1988's *Police Story 2* feature some of the most insanely dangerous stunts ever committed to celluloid. Both films have undergone 4K restorations and the set includes *Police Force* - the US edit of *Police Story* - and the full two-hour version of *Police Story 2* which has never been released in the UK.



ANIME EXPOSÉ

TOKYO GHOUL: RE

Gone Ghoul



PREVIOUSLY ON *TOKYO Ghoul*... The original manga by Sui Ishida began in 2011, following Ken Kaneki, an innocent college student who had the worst first date imaginable. He was attacked by his girlfriend and transformed into a hybrid creature, caught in a war between humans and flesh-eating ghouls. The original *Ghoul* manga ran 14 books; the first eight were adapted fairly faithfully in a 12-part anime in 2014. (The early manga chapters were also adapted respectfully in a live-action *Ghoul* film, which is now out on Blu-ray and DVD, though it doesn't get as far in the story.)

Then things got messy. The second 12-part anime season in 2015, subtitled "Root A", continued directly from the climax of the first anime, but it didn't adapt the subsequent manga books. Instead it told an *alternative* story. Director Shuhei Morita said in a recent Reddit interview that Ishida himself wanted the anime to go its own way. Morita added that anime is a "completely different medium, so I try not to just copy the manga." Many disgruntled fans thought that Morita made the wrong call.

However, *Root A* isn't *totally* different from the manga. It doesn't reveal the Ghouls to be aliens, or sends its hero to 1920s Germany. Several story developments are broadly similar, and leave most of the principal characters alive in both the manga and anime versions, which end with Ken at the mercy of the anti-Ghoul human forces, the CCG.

Tokyo Ghoul: re, then, seems to be a sequel to both. It's based on a canonical follow-up manga of the same name by Ishida, which began in

2014 and should have ended when you read this. The *re* anime is destined to run two seasons – it'll resume this October – and some details in its later episodes may contradict *Root A* irreconcilably. Moreover, if you've only seen *Ghoul* in anime form, then *re* is likely to leave many mysteries unanswered, as they were explored in the part of the manga which *Root A* replaced.

But it's certainly possible to get into the start of *re* from the end of *Root A*, for all the militant online fans who insist that you should read the manga instead. And anyone who watches, say, the *X-Men* films, can live with story contradictions and unanswered questions.

NEW RECRUITS

Whichever version you've followed, *re* – directed by franchise newcomer Odahiro Watanabe – begins a couple of years later. The war between CCG and ghouls goes on, and now we're following it largely from the CCG viewpoint. There are still familiar faces in that organisation, like Akira Mado (daughter of the mad-eyed Kureo Mado, still missing) and the face-stitched Juzo, more stable than when he was younger. However, *re* focuses on a new CCG division and characters, the Quinx squad.

This is basically CCG's response to hybrids like Ken Kaneki. Its soldiers are experiments in building better anti-Ghoul fighters by implanting humans with "quince", weapons refashioned from Ghoul organs. The Quinx team is mostly male. There's the chronically angry, resentful Urie;



"GHOUL USED TO BE A HORROR SERIES; MUCH OF THE TIME, RE FEELS LIKE JUST ANOTHER FIGHT SHOW."



the sawtoothed, graceless Ginshi; and the gentle, androgynous Toru. Saiko piles on the comic relief; she's a chronic female otaku who can strongly resemble the heroine of *Himouto! Umaro-chan* at her sloppiest.

And then there's their leader, a white-haired youth called Haise, whose kind demeanour masks ferocious fighting prowess and personality issues. Haise happens to look and sound exactly like Ken Kaneki... and it's soon clear that's who he is. Well, kind of. He's been reprogrammed by the CCG, his memory erased, so that he's now entirely committed to the anti-Ghoul cause. The Quinx squad is his family now, as precious to him as the members of Café Anteiku were back when he was Ken. Yet Ken's not wholly gone. He haunts Haise in visions, as Ken was once haunted by his late girlfriend Rize.

But we're a long way from when *Tokyo Ghoul* was primarily a story of one troubled hero. These days, it's bursting with characters old and new, perhaps too many. The show often goes

for multiple overlapping fight scenes between umpteen players, which can be seriously underwhelming; they miss the emotional stakes and physical trauma of the one-on-one encounters in *Ghoul*'s early episodes. *Ghoul* used to be a *horror* series; much of the time, *re* feels like another fight show.

Between fights, though, there are still interesting character arcs working forward, and some very welcome reappearances. For example, if you've seen the spin-off OVA story *Pinto* (released in the UK by Anime Limited as a double pack with *Jack*), then you'll recognise the disturbingly merry girl photographer Chie, still loyal to her gourmet pal Shuu (and he's seen much better days).

And there are still moments in *re* that have real punch, such as when Haise visits a newly-established coffee shop, the titular "re." He notices its owner, a beautiful young woman, staring at his face in utter shock... as if he's a loved one returned from the dead. ●

ALSO STREAMING...



SWORD ART ONLINE ALTERNATIVE: GUN GALE ONLINE

The continuation of the adventures of Kirito is due in October, subtitled *Alicization*. This season, though, sees a side-story with a different protagonist, Llenn (aka Karen). Of course she's in immersive virtual reality, donning a cute petite avatar as she plays the *Gun Gale Online* fighting game. The SAO franchise is usually animated by A-1 Pictures (*Blue Exorcist*), but this spinoff is handled by 3HZ, a new studio behind *Flip Flappers* and *Princess Principal*.



WOTAKOI

A-1 Pictures, meanwhile, serves up this office comedy, plaintively subtitled *Love is Hard for Otaku*. It's about a mixed foursome of, well, otaku (would your back have gone up if we'd said 'geeks'?). They hang out, argue, have relationships and live – someone show this series to the geek-patronising mainstream! Hopefully, the show will remove the ugly aftertaste from the romcom *Recovery of an MMO Junkie*, whose director Kazuyoshi Yaginuma turned out to all have the online charm of Rosanne Barr.



HINAMATSURI

This is another comedy, but it's hard to classify beyond that. You can see it as a very eccentric dad-daughter show, as yakuza criminal Nitta suddenly has his palatial home invaded by Hina, a girl who appears from a metal chrysalis, which itself appears from nowhere. Hina, naturally, has formidable superpowers, as does another girl who follows her. Both girls work their way into Nitta's neighbourhood while the absurdities pile up on his head. The source manga has been running since 2010.

ANIME EXPOSÉ

GOLDEN KAMUY

Japan's Wild North



1

HERE'S A TEASER. Try to think of any anime – a film, TV show or whatever – which meets the following three conditions. One, it should be set in Japan; two, its main story should take place before 1930; and three, it should have no sci-fi / fantasy elements – no time-travel, magic or anachronistic tech.

You'll find there are amazingly few anime that fit those conditions. The *Rurouni Kenshin* saga qualifies, as does the film *Sword of the Stranger*, but you won't find many others. It's far easier to think of real-world period anime set outside Japan, like *Rose of Versailles* (France), *Heidi* (Switzerland) and *Emma* (England).

This season's *Golden Kamuy*, though, is set in historic Japan – well, kind of. The action takes place on the northern island of Hokkaido, at the start of the 20th century, when Hokkaido was still very much its own place (many people think it still is). *Kamuy* depicts the island as a wild, snowy region, with sometimes lethal wildlife – man-eating bears abound – where the “Japanese” from the south coexist uneasily with Hokkaido's locals, the hunter-gathering Ainu. Despite the omnipresent snow, the situation plainly parallels America's Wild West.

And as with the west, people are drawn to Hokkaido by the promise of gold. It's the 1900s, and former soldier Sugimoto, who's had his fill of 20th century warfare – trenches, barbed wire, machine guns – has quit the army and is panning for riches in Hokkaido's wilderness. A drunken friend tells him the tall-sounding tale of a vast hoard of stolen gold. Its location is supposedly hidden on a multi-part “map” – tattoos on the skins of escaped criminals which must be assembled, one way or another, to point to the loot. After telling Sugimoto all this, the drunkard realises how much he's blabbed and attacks his companion, but ends up killed by a bear. On

his attacker's body, Sugimoto finds strange tattoos...

He quickly gains another acquaintance – Asirpa, an Ainu girl who's a skilled hunter despite her diminutive size. After helping each other against the local killer wildlife, they team up to look for the rumoured treasure. Each of the pair has heroic motives. Sugimoto wants the gold for the wife of a dead friend, and Asirpa wants to avenge her father – the gold was gathered originally by the Ainu people, and her father was killed when it was stolen. But there are a great many other parties after the gold too, for more grandiose reasons.

SKIN YOUR SQUIRREL

Based on a *Young Jump* manga by Satoru Noda and animated by the young Geno Studio (formed by some of the staff of the ill-fated Manglobe studio), *Golden Kamuy* confounds expectations. From the set-up – a snow-covered wilderness, deadly wildlife, and hordes of violent, ruthless men – you might expect an anime resembling the Oscar-winning film *The Revenant* (2015), whose linear story was told on one note, all male fury and obsession. Instead, *Golden Kamuy* is an anime gumbo, with a story and tone that run all over the place.

For starters, *Kamuy* is filled with what the BBFC would call “strong bloody violence.” Much of this gets meted out on Sugimoto, until even DiCaprio's character in *Revenant* might say that it goes a bit far. There are grisly bits involving eyes and fingers, while you'll never look at a chopstick the same way again. But the show is as preposterous as it is violent. There are a crazy number of crazy enemies, ranging from an army unit led by a mad lieutenant who's had half his brain shot out in



2



3

Caution: Bears

As presented in the series, Hokkaido's brown bears were indeed a hazard to settlers in the early 20th century. The worst incident was in 1915, when a bear repeatedly raided the town of Tomamae during winter. It killed seven people in a series of terrifying attacks before it was hunted down and shot. In 1990, action star Sonny Chiba directed a live-action film about these events: *Yellow Fangs*. Hikers in Hokkaido and northern Honshu (Japan's mainland) are still warned to beware bears today.

Taiga Drama

One obvious reason why there are so few "real-world" Japanese period dramas in anime is because there are so many made in live-action already. As well as the ones made for cinema, Japan also has its long-established "Taiga dramas". Shown on the public broadcaster NHK, this is a succession of historical drama series; each runs weekly for a full year, with a new one starting in January. The first Taiga drama was shown back in 1963; this year's series, *Segodon*, is the 57th in the line.

1. The first appearance of the Ainu huntress Asirpa. 2. Resting in Asirpa's hospitable Ainu village. 3. The obsessed hunter of Hokkaido's wildlife, Nihei.

battle, to grizzled exiles from Japan's fallen shogun regime. The goofiest characters are a couple of rogue wild men, who harbour perverted fetishes about giving and receiving violent death.

But that's not all. Like so many shows we've covered in these pages, *Golden Kamuy* also has a whole strand about cooking, mostly courtesy of the resourceful Asirpa. Her diet is hunter-carnivore, so vegans and anyone who pales at the thought of skinned squirrels or deer brains should stay away. Still, it's the lightest strand in the show, with an amusing running gag about miso. The food may be a staple for mainland Japan, but for the grossed-out Asirpa, it just looks like poop.

Whether you can digest the gumbo of *Kamuy* may depend on how you prefer your anime served: whether you love anime for its preposterous, dissonant, lurching excesses, or whether you prefer them to be reined in, at least in a historical drama like *Kamuy*. If you like historical anime with a saner, more sober approach, then you may prefer *Sword of the Stranger*, which could stand comparison to a (very exciting) live-action film. *Golden Kamuy*, though, insists that to do justice to a wild and crazy landscape, you need a wild and crazy series, and that anyone expecting it to be like *Revenant* is looking in the wrong wilderness. ●

HISTORY

One of *Kamuy*'s 'historical' characters is an aged Hijikata Toshizo, formerly Vice-Commander of the shogun's Shinsengumi police force. History books say he fell in 1869; *Kamuy* claims they're wrong.



HOKKAIDO WESTERN

The analogies between Hokkaido and America's Wild West prompted a Japanese remake of one of the most famous Western films – 1992's *Unforgiven*, starring and directed by Clint Eastwood. The 2013 Japanese version turns the protagonist into an exiled samurai who flees to Hokkaido after the shogunate's fall. The samurai is played by Ken Watanabe, familiar from *Last Samurai*, *Batman Begins*, *Inception* and the 2014 American *Godzilla*.

10 YEARS IN JAPAN!

Adam Miller considers the past decade in Japan and all of its highlights!

I FIRST MOVED to Japan on a whim, wandering a career centre event in my third year at university, and being attracted by a stall advertising a scheme to work as a volunteer for six months in a foreign country. Before university, I had taken a gap year, but I used it to work at Waitrose and save up enough cash to see me through my first year of drinking and stealing road signs. I didn't really have any plans after graduation, and a degree in Film and English studies doesn't exactly open up a world of opportunities.

After a successful sales pitch, I signed up for the gap year program and selected Japan and Fiji as my two destinations of choice, and for one reason or another, I was chosen to live and work in a preschool in rural Japan. Those six months started with a bang...or more accurately, a smash, as I crashed my bike and broke my two front teeth, something I had done six years beforehand playing basketball (a non-contact sport I might add). I am more than likely one of the only people in the world who have smashed their teeth no fewer than three times in their life, through no fault other than their own clumsiness.

Even burying my face in a concrete storm drain could not quell my enjoyment of Japan; I went white water rafting, pestered the local karaoke company on a weekly basis, ate more KFC than I had ever known possible and got a loyalty card at the local DVD rental store. Maybe it was the great friends I made, the change of pace from university or the welcoming nature of Japanese culture, but I was hooked.

HEADING BACK TO JAPAN

On returning to the UK I started my Master's Degree in Film Studies and for my dissertation I wrote about Japanese cinema, and I dove into my research like a man possessed. I had never been a huge fan of anime or manga, but I gulped it down like a man in the desert discovering an oasis of pure spring water. I also remember reading books by Takashi Murakami, who argued that all art, even pop-culture, had weight, meaning and purpose. Books by William Tsutsui informed me of the cultural importance of Godzilla, Susan Napier taught me of Japan's global impact, and Ryu Murakami fast became my favourite author.

But whilst I was surrounding myself with everything Japanese, very little of what I did was towards my dissertation, but instead laying the foundations for my eventual long-term escape plan to Japan. This led to me handing in my dissertation a month early so I could be back in Japan, this time teaching at a Junior High School. The initial contract was only for six months, after which I was planning on coming home and starting my life in the UK, but it seems it's not only the best laid plans of mice and men that often go astray, but also the vague musings of adults clambering out of adolescence.

NAGOYA, MY HOME AWAY FROM HOME

That was ten years ago, and I have lived in and around Nagoya city ever since. I have opened, run and sold my own business, gotten married and had a daughter, contributed to countless magazines, newspapers and websites, wrote and reluctantly narrated a play, I even started my own monthly free paper with one of my best buddies, which ran for a grand total of 15 issues! Japan, and more specifically, Nagoya, is now my home. I still feel comfortable back in the UK, but when I am there I get a hankering for the Japanese countryside, miso-slathered junk food and the complex culture

that still fascinates me.

I think I can put my long stay in Japan down to two things, my lack of preconceived ideas, and people coming to visit. To the first point, I arrived in Nagoya ten years ago with a group of eight strangers assigned to work in Nagoya, most of which either went home or I lost contact with. However, one of them is an amazing friend and still in Nagoya, and whilst we have a plethora of differences, we do share one common trait (at least I think so); we didn't expect ninja and neon lights.

This may sound stupid or reductive, but the vast majority of the people who I knew fresh off the boat were immediately blown away by the differences, such as warm hand towels given to you before a meal, public toilets that were free and clean, or public transport that actually ran on time. This reverence was often juxtaposed with them complaining about what Japan didn't have, which could be something silly like a food popular in their home country, or something more complex, like a modernised city-hall system (if you live and work in Japan, get ready for waves of paperwork).

These little annoyances could lead to the floodgates of disappointment opening: why are some things archaic and out-dated, and yet preservation of old buildings is often ignored in the interest of modernity? So there were neither neon or ninja (but Japan has plenty of both if you know where to look); Japan didn't fall into either extreme category, but squarely in the middle, and that, for some, was crushingly disappointing, and they fled once that initial rush of stark differences wore off.

I for one love that a minuscule shrine can be nestled between two skyscrapers, or that religious traditions are still strictly followed in an otherwise secular culture. Just like the pop culture in Takeshi Murakami's books, everything has a complexity and depth to it, one which may bore others and goes by unnoticed by most Japanese people, but has kept me curious for a decade. People coming to stay also refuels my curiosity, I get to see Japan through their eyes and appreciate the small touches that I have grown accustomed to; my younger brother couldn't believe that 24 hour convenience stores are everywhere, my dad took a picture of a service station's toilet because it was immaculately clean and decorated with a huge vase of gorgeous flowers (the toilet was empty when he got the snap by the way!), my older brother was blown away that his ears popped as our bullet train hurtled into a tunnel burrowed through a nameless mountain. It's great to get these little reminders about Japan being so cool, and I can keep check that I am not taking anything for granted.

THANK YOU NEO!

NEO magazine and this column has also kept the flame of interest alight; trying to find interesting things to write about obviously has the great side-bonus of me actually experiencing said interesting things. I wouldn't have played *Pokémon Go* and been swept up in that phenomenon had it not been for NEO, my consumption of street foods and interesting dishes would also have been cut dramatically, and I wouldn't have had the chance to speak with so many interesting people. I will miss writing the J-Life section of NEO, but hopefully you'll find me again soon on these hallowed pages...if the editing staff don't change the metaphorical locks as soon as I leave the equally metaphorical building. If you are ever in Nagoya, please look me up, in letting me show you how great this place is, you'll be doing me a huge favour! ●



1. Me and me mates. 2. The GAP Year crew over a decade ago. 3. Had a few downers...a broken arm was one example. 4. Achievement number one, however, is starting this awesome family. 5. This zombie crawl was one of my favourite things over the past ten years!

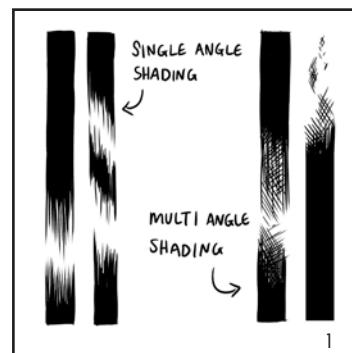
MANGA SCHOOL With Ruth Keattch

HATCHING AND SHADING

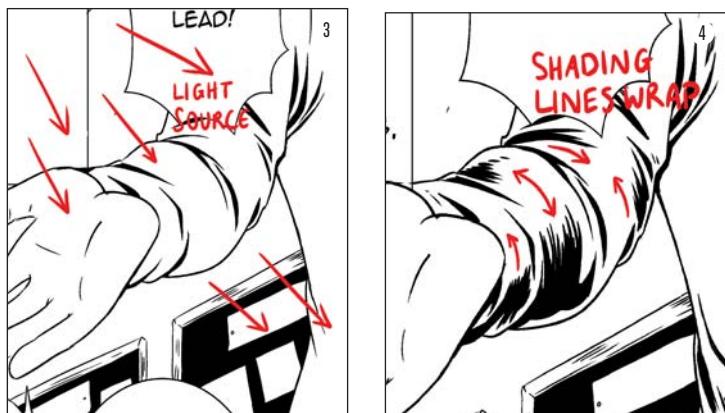
THIS ISSUE LEARN HOW TO CRAFT MANGA-STYLE SHADOWS!



There is one technique in manga drawing that isn't typical to see all that much – and that's the use of black hatching and shading. Ah, but manga uses tones I hear you say! Well, yes they do. But look a little closer at some of your favourite manga and you will definitely see some hatching going on, it's just not overused! So, let's take a look at how to add depth with hatching and shading with your ink!



Make sure you invest in some good quality pens! Chameleon are great for a huge range of colour options, and you can also find some amazing fineliners too. Experiment until you find your match!



1. TECHNIQUES

To start, let's just take a look at some techniques you can use. I have drawn here an example of how the heavier the shading, the darker the image. You will notice that at the lighter end, the hatching all follows on an angle, and as we go darker, the hatching gets thicker. On the second line you can see how this is achieved with different angles being used.

2. PREPARE YOUR INKING

Getting started with hatching and shading is simple – first you need to get your drawing inked and dry, or just inked if you're working digitally. Make sure your line weights are complete as well so it's not flat – changing the line weight where there will be heavy shadows will really help you when it comes to adding the shading.

3. FIND THE LIGHT

Once you have your finished drawing, identify the light source, as you would if you were colouring in with marker pens or digitally. This way you have a rough guide on where the hatching and shading will occur.

4. ONE DIRECTION

Now you can start with your hatching once you have worked out your shadowed areas. Start by picking the direction your lines will follow – it's important that you try to ensure that these starting hatching lines all point in the same way so as not to make it look like a scribble. As you start with this first step, try to do this for all of the shadowed areas.

5. GO DARKER

Secondly, you can go over the hatching to make it darker – use this for areas that are either black (like hair) or there would be a darker shadow in the area (under the chin). You can also experiment with using a different angled hatching over the top as shown in the first panel, but if you don't feel confident, stick with the same angle as before.

6. THE END!

Carry on with this method until all the areas that need the hatching are finished! Now you've hatched your drawing – and you might not even need to tone it after this!



ART TOOLS: CHAMELEON PENS

Chameleon Color Tones allow you to achieve multiple tones with one marker. In the Deluxe Set, a pack of 20 markers gives you over 100 tones, and the new palette of 30 new colours (50 in total) will leave artists with near endless possibilities. Visit www.chameleonpens.com for more!



[ANIME REVIEW]

DRAGON BALL SUPER PART 4

Double Trouble!



06 AUGUST // MANGA // PG // ACTION // £24.99 (DVD), £29.99 (BLU-RAY) // 300 MINS // 12 EPISODES

PLOT The Z Fighters are back with a double bill of exciting and explosive arcs! Although Goku might be one of the strongest beings in the cosmos, he might have met his match when it transpires that he'll have to fight one of the strongest beings from all of time and space... himself?

Though often – perhaps inevitably – compared by fans to its predecessors in the *Dragon Ball* franchise, *Dragon Ball Super* has almost certainly proven itself by this point to be a worthy successor to the series that came before it.

Having moved beyond the arcs that were retellings of the last couple of *Dragon Ball Z* movies, the series now has a chance to find its own feet, establishing new villains and plotlines to move the story to new heights!

This latest collection of episodes nicely caps off the climactic events of the previous arc, while treating viewers to a brand-new, self-contained storyline, and introducing the next big bad who'll likely come to dominate future collections for some time to come. The former sees Goku and team taking on a sentient liquid known as Commeson,

a malevolent entity with the power to take on the form of other beings, even ones as strong as Vegeta!

And as if one evil twin just wasn't enough trouble, the next arc introduces Goku Black, an evil form of everyone's favourite Super Saiyan, who has destroyed the world of the future, and now seeks to extend his reach to the present as well!

The trouble that most shonen series have – especially those as long-running as *Dragon Ball* – is raising the stakes between arcs and making new antagonists as powerful and threatening as those that have come before. *Dragon Ball Super* has definitely done an excellent job in the last arc of creating new avenues to introduce said antagonists – by expanding the universe of the series to, well, other universes, it leaves a lot of room for new foes to appear. Goku may be able to go toe to toe with the strongest beings in his universe, but with 11 other universes to contend with, all bets are off!

However, the effects of this scale aren't really felt in this collection specifically. While it is alluded to that there are greater threats on the way, the bulk of the episodes in this fourth series boxset are devoted to the 'Copy-Vegeta Saga'. While certainly entertaining, especially to fans of the series, viewers probably won't be left wondering if Goku can manage to prevail against a clone of the first major enemy from the earliest episodes of *Dragon Ball Z* – especially not when the *real* Vegeta is standing on the sidelines dishing out criticisms to his gloopy doppelganger.

VOICE ACTOR

The English voice actor for Vegeta's clone double is none other than Brian Drummond, the original actor for Vegeta's appearances in *Dragon Ball Z*, before Funimation began producing their own dubbed version.



That being said, the collection is still a fun watch, and the beginning episodes of the new arc are a tantalising look at what's to come. Fans will definitely enjoy that injection of nostalgia factor, too. The time travel plotlines of *Dragon Ball* have always been among its most enduring and popular, and this fresh new take on a tried and true concept seems like it'll be no different!

"THE BEGINNING EPISODES OF THE NEW ARC ARE A TANTALISING LOOK AT WHAT'S TO COME"

But naturally, the most important aspect for any collection of any entry in the *Dragon Ball* franchise is the action. This show is famous for being all action, all the time, after all (even if that action is a little drawn out at times!). As mentioned, the 'Copy-Vegeta Saga', for all its problems, still has some excellent fights that evoke the nostalgia of *Dragon Ball Z*'s opening arcs, and the collection closes with a battle between Goku and 'Goku Black' that is as blisteringly-paced as it is exciting, and will likely keep viewers hooked for the next season, even if elements of this one left them feeling a little cold.

The art for such scenes, too, is particularly eye-catching, as Toei Animation prove why they're one of

the most well-known and beloved studios out there, and having over 30 years of practise in animating the *Dragon Ball* world and characters definitely doesn't hurt either!

In fact, the main issue with this collection isn't with the show itself, but the way in which it is delivered to viewers. For a long-running series such as this, which is almost certain to continue for many, many more episodes over the next few years, events in the series are expected to unfold with a relatively slow pace. Although *Dragon Ball Super* has, in the past, improved its pacing, constricting each arc so far to under 20 episodes, the series still likes to take its time. The result of this is that some viewers might find that the 12-episode collection that has seemingly become the norm for a lot of boxsets just isn't enough of a runtime for the series, with things coming to a close just as soon as they were starting to get interesting.

Still, overall, the fourth collection is still a worthy addition to the series, and gives the fans a few fun scrapes in classic *Dragon Ball* style, before moving on to meatier fare by the collection's end. It might feel like it's over all too quickly, but it'll likely leave you wanting more.

This dozen-episode run of *Dragon Ball Super* moves things towards an interesting direction for the collections that are still to come, but admittedly lags a little in the middle with an occasionally lacklustre and low-stakes filler story that doesn't quite measure up to the arcs that surround it. ●



IF YOU LIKED THIS

If you're still hungry for more action-packed shonen shenanigans after this series, you might also enjoy the new release of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Diamond is Unbreakable* - also coming in August!

女のストレス・スカッと爽快コミック!

志賀白書パネル 11月号増刊 平成29年9月29日発行・発行

憎しみ・嫉妬・病みを抱え
こじらせた女たちの
大逆転復讐人生劇!!
どん底から這い上がる...
義母に子供を殺される!?
マザコン夫はママの味方!!
唯一の女友達は男依存!!
寝盗られ覚悟の離婚ドラマ
ニート義姉の通販狂い
都会かぶれのウツ地獄...
独女の悲惨な最期...
不倫の末のビンボーくじ

1
卷頭カラー
桐野さおり

天罰下れ!

ハガタの裏切り

妻紙イラスト 小野拓

夫の裏切りに耐え
妄想で反撃を
繰り返していたが...



4 丹羽珠央

4 丹羽珠央

INTERNET FRAUD
Internet fraud has multiplied five-fold in Japan in recent years, with the number-one scam being messages from a friend who needs a bank transfer favour. Japanese bank customers have been sent sample texts of the type of requests made, with pointers to common grammar mistakes made by foreigners. Really...? A gaijin speaks good enough Japanese to run a scam, but not to get a legit job!?

MANGA SNAPSHOT

STUPID WOMAN'S BLACK BETRAYAL

Jonathan Clements on scammers, frenemies and toxic colleagues

ISSUE #0 // DEBUT YEAR: 2018 // PAGE COUNT: C.500 // PUBLISHER: OZORA // PRICE: 734 YEN (£5.06) // CYCLE: PROTOTYPE

IFIND IT hard to imagine anyone walking into a shop and asking if they have the latest issue of *Stupid Woman's Black Betrayal* (1). But still, misery loves a manga company, to coin a phrase, and previous instalments of this column have already identified a Japanese market sector of housewives who just love to see other people having a horrible time.

The cover promises tales of conflict and women's stress, posing such brain-teasers as "Did my mother-in-law kill my children?" and promising such excitements as "the financial madness of a stepsister." The contents page, however, offers a perkier, more upbeat promise of "dramatic recoveries, lifting themselves up from the worst of problems."

Intent on promoting itself as a true-story publication, *Stupid Woman's* reader questionnaire is rather thrilling – the answers it solicits seemingly painting a picture of marital discord, financial woes and overwhelming torment. "Has anyone ever tried to kill you?" it asks. "Have you ever considered divorce?" And then, out of nowhere: "What are your hobbies?" Without readership data, the publishers are unable to tell advertisers who their readers are, which probably explains why the swag quiz in this issue has nothing to offer but cash payments and phone cards. If this magazine ever gets off the ground, one imagines feisty ad services for divorce lawyers, private investigators and probably one of those Mystic Meg fortune tellers we enjoy so much.

Manga creator Saori Kirino has become something of a regular fixture whenever this column checks out manga for women. Sometimes she's shown up four or five times in a single magazine. On *Stupid Woman*, she gets the plum opening spot with colour spreads. Her Twitter account @chanchaco77 and its associated blog reveals a life of fine foods and floral appreciations, leavened with occasional magazine cover shots of her latest horror stories from late capitalist society – goodtime girls necking bottles of Beaujolais, weeping geisha, and cheating husbands.

This is a journeywoman manga author who plainly loves her work – up all hours working on her pages, and determined to live the good life while it lasts, in this case putting the characters through the wringer in *A Silly Thing* (2), a 47-page one-shot in this issue about a woman who, claims the opening spread, is accused of loving her job more than her family. But if you thought that was where this was heading, you'd have been taken in by the red herring.

A Silly Thing is, instead, an in-law appeasement drama, in

which our heroine Mitsuko is trying to get on with the factory job she so desperately needs, while facing increasing pressure from her mother-in-law to do more about the house. The frankly conservative tone of the opening spread is not an editorial summary – it is a quote from the very same mother-in-law, who quietly fumes that her son's wife is not at home full-time. Mitsuko is soon dragged into a five-year sentence as an unpaid nurse to the ailing woman, although her troubles are not over when the old lady finally dies.

In a twist, her husband then walks out on her, revealing that he's had a mistress all along. Kirino's pages tease the reader with what appears at first to be Mitsuko stabbing him in a jealous rage, but it is only a dream. She fumes and rages at his betrayal, only to hear that he has been killed in a car accident. Playing the weeping widow, she smirks to herself that her husband has finally done her a favour, by preventing her from having to do time for killing him (3).

Kirino's story is beautifully told – our heroine is largely passive; the drama comes from what she *plans* to do, or *fantasises* about doing. With a certain mundane realism, she fails to take action, but has an awful lot of fun thinking about what she might do, and smugly thinking about all the money she's going to collect. She's so passive, in fact, that you reach the end and wonder if she *really did it...*

There's more in-law appeasement in Tamao Miwa's *Mask of Lies* (4). Asami marries Takashi, and must concede, as do a growing number of young Japanese brides, that one of his parents will be living with them. But Takashi's mother isn't merely a scowling termagant, she is a sex-mad grand-cougar, and carries on with a youthful stud young enough to be her son. Miwa's manga ramps up the awkward tension through the layout of a standard Japanese home. With only a couple of rooms, there is literally no way that Asami can avoid walking in on her bonking mother-in-law, although the old lady might even enjoy the frisson of being discovered. If that wasn't twisty enough, a ring on the doorbell reveals that Takashi's father is still alive – what happens if he finds out...? Or does he already know?

SINS IN SUBURBIA

The stories in this magazine are wonderfully observed urban terrors, cutting to the heart of the implied reader's fears – loneliness, isolation, and of course betrayal. Is she losing her looks? Is her husband cheating? Can she trust the hussy >>>



DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES?

How realistic is the sin-filled suburbia of this magazine? A survey in 2008 by Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare found that about 20% of men and 11% of women admitted to extra-marital affairs in the previous year. There's even a fetish for *hitozuma* (married women working as part-time prostitutes), although reporter Jake Adelstein discovered that only one in five of these was the genuine article.

>>> next door? Well, can she?

In Chiyako Fujimori's *Happiness Enraged* (5), young yuppie couple Shinichi and Eiko move into a new house, where the neighbours seem very friendly. But Eiko is soon fuming at the cut-off shorts and low-cut blouse of Saya next door, the booby, giggly trophy wife of a wealthy businessman, who seems a little too friendly with the hapless Shinichi. She seeks solace with her other neighbours, an older couple, only for the grandpa to start trying to fondle her. The last straw almost comes when she catches Shinichi canoodling with Saya at a bar, but all is well at the end, for Shinichi and Eiko, at least. Gropey grandpa's wife catches him in bed with Sexy Saya, thereby revealing that while there is indeed a scandal in the street, it's nothing to do with Eiko's husband.

The heroine of Yuri Ikuta's *The Woman Chasing Happiness* (6) is Kuniko, a 30-something rep for the Ozora fashion company (see boxout) who is conducting an office romance with fashion mag editor Atsuro. They keep it quiet because of obvious conflicts of interest, although Atsuro has been keeping it quiet that he has a fiancée. Much like the passive heroine of *A Silly Thing*, Kuniko's response is both mundane and thoroughly modern – we get to experience her growing rage through the years as she looks in on her rival's blog, seething as the unknowing Ririko steals her husband, her child, her home... her happiness. Years later, that she runs into an older, portlier Atsuro in the street, and he seems confused by her comments about his wife and child. Ririko's blog, it turns out, is a work of fantasy by a single mother on the other side of town, and by obsessively reading it every day, Kuniko has managed to catfish herself! What could be more post-modern than a stalker who is jealous of someone's fake life?

Similar issues hound the heroine of *B's Blog* (7) by Naru



Komaki, in which our attractive 30-something editor heroine [Hello? What? – Ed.] Eriko becomes an avid reader of an online diary written by someone called Aiko. She soon becomes envious of Aiko's swish lifestyle, all posh handbags and gourmet food. Sensing a potential new author, Eriko arranges to meet her, only to find that her blogging idol is a boorish, ugly boozer obsessed with male prostitutes. "Aiko", it turns out, is playing a prolonged role-playing game, a lonely lady presenting herself as something that she isn't. One wonders about who is being "betrayed" here – the implication is that it is Eriko, since Aiko seems quite happy with her life choices, and it's only the editor who is agast.

There's fake life, and then there's fake friends – a problem melodramatically demonstrated in Lynch Itoh's *Gomen ne* (8). The title is a cheeky, jokey truncation of "Gomen nasa", the Japanese for sorry. In dropping the verb form and adding a chatty suffix, it deliberately ruins much of the pleading, submissive quality of the term. "Gomen ne" is what you say to your best bud when you take advantage of a botched chess move or a gap in *Super Mario Kart*, it's such a half-hearted sorry that it's barely a sorry at all – soz, as the kidz might say.

Bob-haired Noriko says sorry all the time and never really means it. She's sorry that she's late, she's sorry that she confused the waiter, she's totally sorry-not-sorry about every situation she drags her friend Ikumi into. But Ikumi is growing up, she's moving on, and now that she has a small child to care for, Noriko's slapdash attention to detail is no longer a laughing matter. Tiring of the attention that Ikumi's daughter is getting, Noriko eventually plays a trick on Ikumi, wrapping up a pillow in a blanket, pretending it's the baby, and (teehee!), chucking it off the balcony. Haha, she says, sorry-not-sorry! But we all



“THIS IS A JOURNEYWOMAN MANGA AUTHOR WHO PLAINLY LOVES HER WORK – UP ALL HOURS WORKING ON HER PAGES, AND DETERMINED TO LIVE THE GOOD LIFE WHILE IT LASTS.”

know that this is the last time that these “friends” will meet. As with several other manga in this publication, the horror is not from what actually happens, but from what the protagonist briefly *believes* to be happening – the emotional energy is much the same.

But some of the protagonists do indeed go all the way. In *Miscast* by Kairi Wada, Ritsuko is a 33-year-old woman, boldly proclaiming in her opening monologue that someone's gender makes no difference in her workplace. She humble-brags a little that she's been seeing her boyfriend for five years, and has a great job, and mentions to her friends, somewhat tactlessly, that she will slum it as a housewife only when she gets pregnant. But Ritsuko's grand plan requires him to pop the question and settle down, and unknown to her, he is planning to relocate to the Los Angeles office, unheeding of the disruption that might bring into her life.

Wada's storyline has "Mr Tanuki", the nickname for a mole-ish old duffer in Sales, lend an ear to Ritsuko's dilemma,

seemingly out of recognition that, for the older, more conservative generation, Ritsuko has created this problem for herself by trying to have it all. "Times have changed," he harrumphs, except plainly times haven't. Ritsuko is still a prisoner of biology; she has still invested five good years in a man who gives her little thought, and now he's about to ruin it all by walking out on their unspoken contract.

So she hits him with a vase and leaves him dead at his desk. Well, that escalated quickly.

Redolent though it may be of P!nk's 2006 anthem *Stupid Girl*, I'm still not sure that the title of this magazine is a goer. It certainly got my attention on Amazon Japan, but it's my job to look for new manga magazines to cover. This isn't a magazine that calls its readers "stupid", but it does invite them to derive a certain glee from the stupidity of others, and that seems unnecessarily vindictive and disdainful, at least from where I am sitting. What happened to sympathy? What happened to sisterhood? There is a certain pleasing realism in the depiction of toxic colleagues and life-long frenemies, feckless lovers and hapless husbands, and there's an interesting dramatic direction in storylines that sometimes hinge on the mere *threat* of betrayal. Your mileage may vary, but a magazine that actively seeks to call out "stupidity" in others, some of whom are really just unlucky, seems like a step too far. ●

THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

If you killed someone in Japan before 2006, the 15-year statute of limitations means that you can get away scot-free if you are not arrested before 2021. This is fascinating, considering how many cold cases can be solved with new developments in forensics. Expect to see a whole bunch of thrillers on this subject soon!

PRODUCT PLACEMENTS

It's a clever move for Yuri Iwata to name her clothes company Ozora, as the Ozora publishers will hardly complain about the brand recognition. A real-world company in Japan might prove reluctant about any form of unlicensed product placement. This is why so many brand names are slightly altered in manga and anime. It's not always bad spelling; sometimes it's because nobody wants to have to spend a week trying to get approvals from a corporation just because their drink shows up in a scene.

COSPLAY STAR

Arkham Catwoman

JESSIENOOCIES COSPLAY

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Shoot

I'm used to shooting fantasy or survivalist characters in woodlands (I live in Wales which is perfect for that!), so this urban environment was very refreshing.

Onlookers

There were quite a few as it was in the centre of Manchester. It doesn't bother me so much as I know they are looking at me for a reason (being in a Catsuit and all!), and they were friendly. I think people are just curious really!

Character

I had toyed with the idea of doing *Arkham City* Catwoman for a while but it wasn't until I finally got round to playing *Arkham Knight* that I decided to cosplay her. I fell in love with her updated design in the game and I love how she's so fearlessly independent. I also really liked how they wrote her relationship with Bruce in the games.

Costume

After spending a few weeks researching everything I could about the costume, I realised it was more like a mirrored version of her *Arkham City* design. That said, I purchased a dye sub pattern and had it printed onto spandex. I then modded the suit to have her new AK shape, and used puff paint to give it a more textured feel.

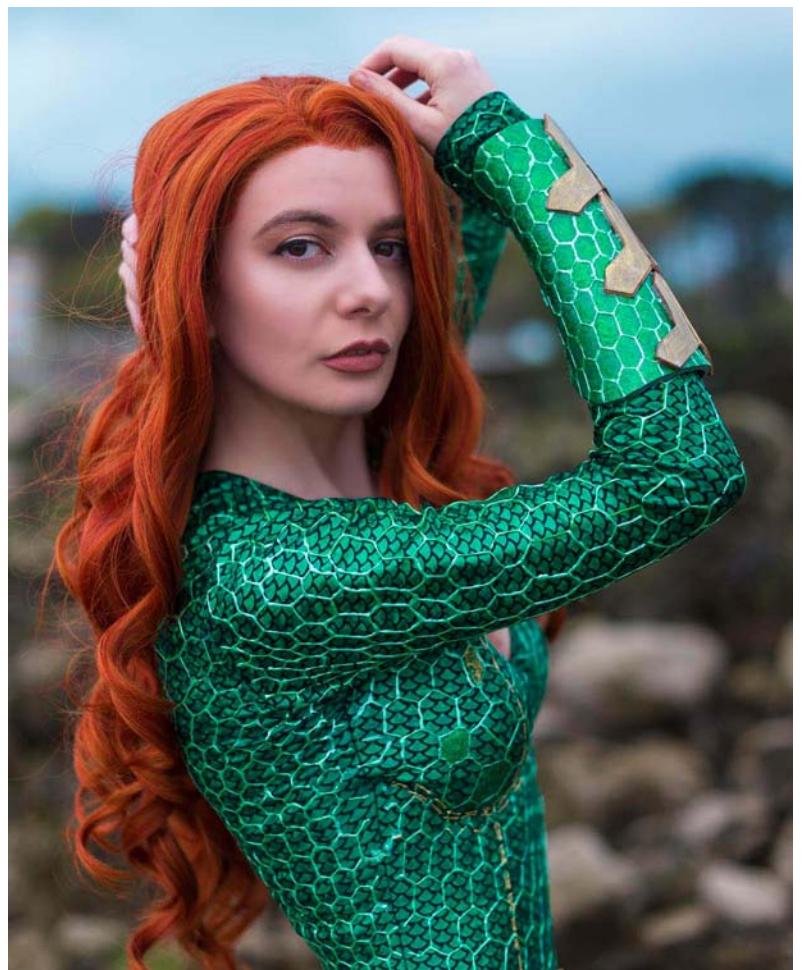
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PROFESSION STORYBOARD ARTIST / FREELANCE ILLUSTRATOR

FAVOURITE SHOW IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT KAMEN RIDER, I WILL COME AND JOIN IN

BIOGRAPHY

Just like others, I started drawing at a young age, about six years old. But it became more interesting after I got to college. I have not been through formal art school training; I attended college to study engineering. While there I learnt about computer programming, and I was always doodling and drawing in the middle of class. After I graduated, I joined an art course for fundamental drawing skills.

At the early stages of my drawing journey, I feel like I was just doodling stuff, and after I learnt about the fundamentals I realised what I was doing wrong all this time – about anatomy, gesture, composition, visual storytelling, perspective and many many more. There's so much to think about, at first it's frustrating to think about all of these fundamentals at once. But, slowly, you will get the point – and that's the process! There's no shortcut for it, just keep on drawing all the time. Your skill will grow based on how much you spend the time on it. I would really like making art with sci-fi, mecha, and monsters as a theme, or a tokusatsu (*Kamen Rider*) based theme. I find that making that stuff would be fun because of many interesting futuristic shapes.

The first project that I worked on was *Xenopets: Concurro* as an inker and later on *Aldnoah.Zero*, also as inker. Now I am currently involved as a cover illustrator for the manga *Her Impact*. See the extract on page 086! Also, check out my work on Instagram: [instagram.com/arashikun/](https://www.instagram.com/arashikun/).



INSPIRATION

Most of my inspiration comes from tokusatsu, heroes and sci-fi movies, like *Kamen Rider*, *Pacific Rim*, and Marvel cinematic movies. *Kamen Rider* has a unique transformation sequence for each series, and also the monster designs look fantastic. That plays such a big part to inspire me to make a monster or creature that looks imaginative, but also natural.



1. The Dark Grey Angel.

2. Kamen Rider Build.

3. S-08 Sirgun.

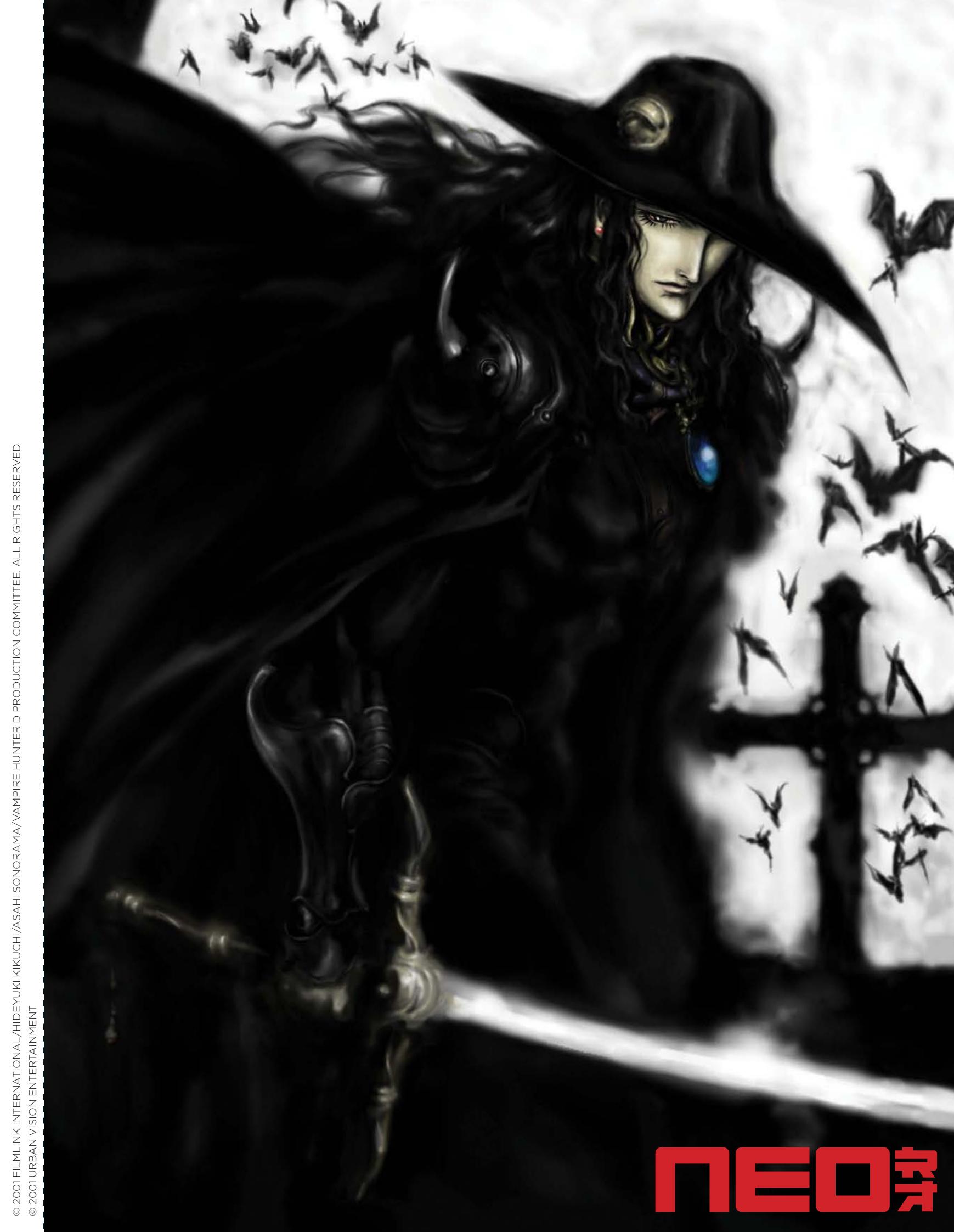


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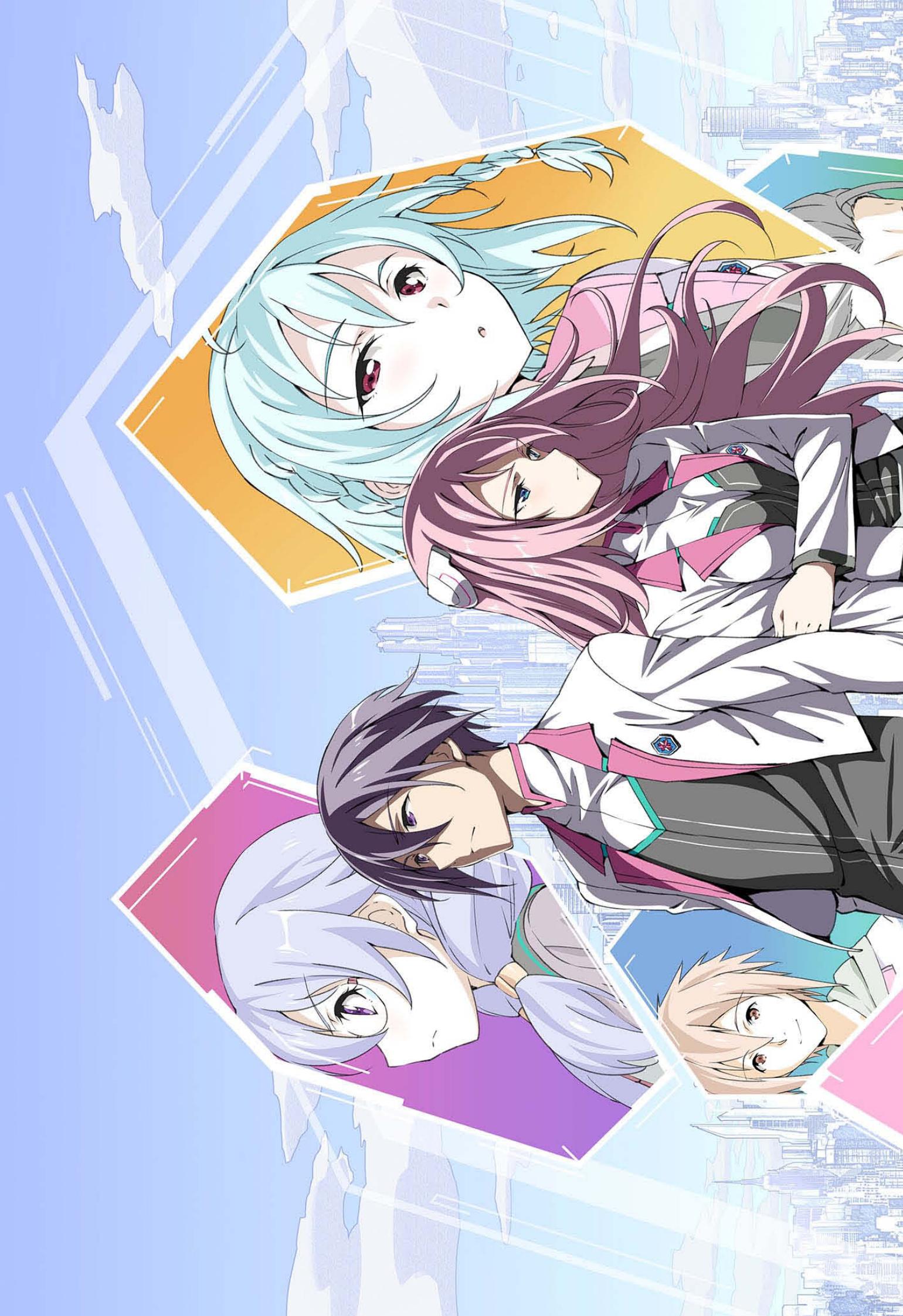


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STAY CALM AND PANIC ON

As *Full Metal Panic!* returns with *Invisible Victory*, NEO's David West meets creator Shouji Gatou at MCM London Comic Con to hear about his changing relationship with his own characters – and why it's all in the details now.

IT HAS BEEN 20 years since Shouji Gatou's *Full Metal Panic!* debuted as a novel series in Japan. It's the story of a teen soldier called Sousuke Sagara who is assigned by the anti-terrorist organisation Mithril to protect high school girl Kaname Chidori from the hostile forces of the paramilitary group Amalgam. The preceding anime series, *Full Metal Panic! The Second Raid*, aired in 2005, but now Sagara and Chidori are back on our screens with *Full Metal Panic! Invisible Victory* with Shouji Gatou returning to his creation as screenwriter on the new show. "The novels finished in 2010 and then I was busy with *Amagi Brilliant Park*," says Gatou about the long delay between series. "When that finished it was 2015 by then and that's when we started working on this series of *Full Metal Panic*. It took a little while so here we are."

OLDER AND DAFTER

For Gatou, his work on *FMP* spans a sizeable part of his adult life and his relationship with his characters has changed as the years have passed:

something he notes with reference to Sergeant Melissa Mao, the hard-drinking, tough-as-nails ex-Marine of Mithril, and commanding officer Andrei Sergeivich Kalinin, a former member of Russia's Spetsnaz special forces group.

"When I started writing the novels I was 26, and now I'm 47," says Gatou. "At the beginning, I guess I was closer in age to Mao and I was still close enough to being a teenager to be able to write it from a teenager's point of view, but now I'm nearer to Kalinin and the grown-ups, so it's almost like I'm looking at my own children. Back then I thought that these men in their 50s were cool, but now that I'm closer in age to them I realise that they're not and I have them say more daft things."

Full Metal Panic! has always set itself apart from the competition by the range of its storytelling. On the one hand, it's a classic boy-meets-girl set-up with the developing relationship between Sousuke and Kaname, but then it's also a mecha action series, and then there was the comedy spin-off *Full Metal*



1. Don't turn around, but you'll never guess who's behind you!
2. Kaname was starting to worry her Uber driver didn't know where he was going.
3. Melissa was on her way to collect the award for Best Major Kusanagi Haircut.
4. Another day, another terrible shaving accident for Sousuke.

"WE COULDN'T GO BACK TO FUMOFFU. THE MAIN THING WAS TO TELL THE STORY AND TO GET RIGHT THE WAY THROUGH TO THE END OF THE NOVEL"

Panic! Fumoffu from 2003. "We couldn't go back to *Fumoffu*," says Gatou, about the return to a serious action style for *Invisible Victory*. "The main thing was to tell the story and to get right the way through to the end of the novel."

HANDS OFF

Invisible Victory features some of the most spectacular and thrilling action scenes in the franchise's history, although Gatou is not too hands-on with how those scenes are translated from the page to the screen. "I leave the details of the action to the animators, but I do write for example they collide at the crossroads and the car flips over. But I don't write the composition of the shots or how the car flips, for example."

In addition to the mecha mayhem, there are shootouts and chase scenes worthy of the great action maestro John Woo. "I like John Woo," says Gatou, "but I like all different kinds of action movies so there isn't one particular one that I would say I was influenced by. I think the action scenes are more influenced by the animator who does the storyboards for those scenes. In episode four, where all the pigeons come out, that's very John Woo-esque but I think that's down to the animator who did the storyboards."

With *Invisible Victory*, the anime catches up with the novels, which concluded with the two parts of *Always, Stand By Me*. As screenwriter on the anime, Gatou is adapting his own work. Asked whether he ever wishes he could change something about the novels, particularly now that eight years have passed since the last two volumes were published, he replies, "I sometimes think that, but the anime and the novel are different. They can never be exactly the same. There is a way of telling a story that suits a novel and a way of telling a story that suits an anime."

DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

With the long gap between anime series, there was always the chance that fans would have moved on and forgotten about these characters. "That still makes me nervous now, but I'm making it for the people who do want it, who want to see what happens next," says Gatou.

Over the course of the anime adaptations, *Full Metal Panic!* has moved between three different studios, Gonzo, Kyoto Animation and Xebec, but that's not been the only change that has had an impact on *Invisible Victory*.

"Everything is a lot more detailed now," says Gatou, >>>

Books Vs Mecha

With its awesome mecha, *Full Metal Panic!* is a franchise that lends itself to merchandising. "They always send stuff to me so I do have a collection," says Gatou. "I buy the models myself as well, but I don't have anywhere to display them, my place is full of books."



5



6



7

5. When you totally blank someone because they didn't like your new profile photo on Facebook. 6. Little known fact: many giant mecha carry flick knives that they bought on a school trip to France. 7. After school, Sousuke and Kaname liked to really let their hair down and get crazy. LOL.

"I LIKE JOHN WOO, BUT I LIKE ALL DIFFERENT KINDS OF ACTION MOVIES SO THERE ISN'T ONE PARTICULAR ONE THAT I WOULD SAY I WAS INFLUENCED BY."

>>> "the characters, the backgrounds, the resolution is much better. And I think the internet is making people more exacting. Back in 2002, characters' faces would be off all the time, but now that's not tolerated, so the way we make things has changed a lot. For example, not just with *Full Metal Panic!*, but now you have animators who only draw faces, they don't draw bodies, they specialise in just doing the faces. Nowadays action seems to be less popular. Everyone wants stories about cute schoolgirls and that's tough!"

Katsuichi Nakayama is the director on *Invisible Victory* but the key to the successful collaboration between director and

creator / writer isn't quite what one might have expected. "A lot of drinking!" laughs Gatou when asked how the two of them work together. "Nakayama-san is more of a craftsman than an artist as an animator. He's very good at putting the different parts together and making it work. He's not very pushy but he still works very hard. I'm grateful to him."

So does the anime industry run on Sapporo and Asahi more than ink? "There are a lot of people who don't drink as well," he says. "It just so happens that Nakayama-san and myself both like a drink."

Pour yourself a cold one and check out the first two seasons of *Full Metal Panic* plus *Full Metal Panic! Fumoffu*, out now on Blu-ray from Anime Ltd, while *Invisible Victory* is currently streaming on Crunchyroll. ●



ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR

In 2013, Gatou scored another hit with the debut of *Amagi Brilliant Park* which, like its predecessor, started life as a novel series before jumping over to manga and anime adaptations. It's a comedy series about a magical theme park – quite a change from mecha action, shootouts and political intrigue!

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Old school classics, ready to play, at Super Potato in Tokyo.



BLAST FROM THE PAST: RETRO GAMING

Emily Valentine ponders the appeal of yesteryear

RETRO GAMING HAS been gaining momentum for years, but with the big games companies now taking their slice of the retro pie, it's clear that playing the classics from your childhood is much less niche than it used to be. With Nintendo releasing mini versions of the classic NES and SNES, and a mini Sega Megadrive on the cards for release later this year, retro gaming is back, and with a vengeance. But just what is it that makes it so appealing? Why boot up a copy of *Space Invaders* when you could be playing a slick and beautiful recent release?

SIMPLE PLEASURES

Retro games not only looked basic, but were also (for the most part) incredibly simple to play. Trying to remember the button combinations to execute a particularly wicked move on *Mortal Kombat* was about as complex as it got. And with simplicity comes fun. Ross Lovell, a games developer who's been making games for nearly 15 years, told us how a trip to Tokyo's famous Super Potato gaming store reignited his passion for retro gaming. He bought a Spectrum and set himself a mission to make fun, simple games.

"The great thing about making retro games is that I don't have to worry about all of the extra distractions you have to put in games these days, such as performance and social aspects, in-app purchases and ads. All of these can affect your enjoyment. I wanted to concentrate purely on making games that are fun to play."

BLAST FROM THE PAST

When we play a game from our childhoods we're tapping into a feeling of nostalgia. There's a sense of excitement in playing the games we grew up on, perhaps mixed with a bit of a desire to forget about the reality of adult life for a bit... Cranking up the familiar catchy theme tune and breaking into a sweat when faced with an end of level boss are the sort of experiences that we're trying to relive when we brush off our old copy of *Mario* or *Sonic*.

Andi Hamilton works for Loading Bar, a popular gaming bar with four venues around London. With a mix of retro and modern games available to play, he told us that, "the N64 is by far the most popular piece of retro hardware we have in our bars. Partly due to nostalgia – there are gamers of a certain age who completely lose it when they see *Diddy Kong Racing*, *Mario Kart 64* or *GoldenEye 007* for the first time in a while – but also because of how simple it is to play with your mates on a system like that."

TRAIL BLAZING

At the dawn of the video game era, game developers were constantly breaking new ground. There were no guidelines and the tech was so limited that developers had to work hard to get even a very basic game to work and fit onto cassettes. Ross Lovell told us that he enjoys "playing retro games to experience the games that started genres or blazed a trail for the games we see today".

Power UP at the Science Museum, 2017. Photo: Benjamin Ealovega.



Golden Era

Although developments in technology over the past 30-plus years have given us virtual reality, mobile gaming, stunning hyper-realistic graphics and the ability to play online, it's clear that people still have a real hunger for playing simple, fun, retro games. The golden age of gaming seems to be getting the attention it deserves.

"THE ALLURE OF VIDEO GAMES REALLY IS UNIVERSAL AND THAT'S REFLECTED IN OUR OFFERING TO VISITORS. THERE IS SOMETHING TO EXCITE AND INSPIRE EVERYONE." MICHELLE LOCKHART



The Virtual Boy featuring Wario at Super Potato, Tokyo.



Classic gaming on the N64 console at Loading Bar, Dalston.

The basic mechanics of retro games are often replicated, and adapted for a modern market. Take King's hugely popular 'Match 3' mobile game *Candy Crush Saga* for example. First released in 2012, it's become one of the most successful games of all time, and is essentially a pimped up version of PopCap's 2001 game *Bejeweled*. That didn't stop it becoming a runaway success, with almost 300 million monthly players back in 2017.

LOOKS AND CHARM

The aesthetics of retro console design have a charm that's alluring to the collector and casual player alike. Even though it's possible to get your retro games fix by using an emulator on your PC or phone, nothing feels better than using an old school controller and the consoles you played growing up. Andi Hamilton told us that "retro machines existed before you needed profiles, log-ins and the internet to play, and there's also something completely alien about syncing controllers to a lot of casual gamers. A machine with four big, chunky controllers that fit clearly in the front, and games that are designed to host local multiplayer right out the gate are always going to have a much more instant appeal, retro or otherwise".

UNIVERSAL APPEAL

The Power UP interactive gaming event has been taking place annually since 2016 at London's Science Museum and Manchester's Museum of Science and

Industry, giving visitors the chance to play a huge array of games, computers and consoles from the past 40 years.

Michelle Lockhart, Science Museum Group Commercial Director says that "the allure of video games really is universal and that's reflected in our offering to visitors. There is something to excite and inspire everyone at Power UP – from gaming enthusiasts and retro fans who want to relive the classics, to parents looking to share the games that defined their childhood with their own kids." Events like this not only make gaming more accessible to a wider audience but also demonstrate that the old classics are still fun to play.

Head to www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/see-and-do/power to find out more about the Power UP event in London, and to register now for priority booking for the 2019 event. Tickets are still available at Manchester's Museum of Science and Industry for the event, which takes place between 3-19 August. See www.msimanchester.org.uk/whats-on/power-up for more. ●

UNIVERSAL APPEAL

The increase in spaces for gamers to enjoy retro games outside of the home, and launches of new versions of classic consoles is making retro games much more accessible. Whether you want to be educated or challenged, play for fun or get competitive, play alone or with a group of friends, retro games really do offer something for everyone.



[FILM REVIEW]

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IF YOU LIKE THIS

If crime dramas float your boat, don't miss Akira Kurosawa's masterful thriller *High And Low*, or for classic Kore'eda try *Nobody Knows* and *Our Little Sister*.



CONTROLS

Players have the choice between two main control schemes in *Sushi Striker*. Analogue stick and buttons work quite well, though we found touch screen controls best to keep up with the game's fast-paced action. Works especially well on Switch with a capacitive touch screen stylus!

PLOT Misumi (Koji Yakusho) faces the death penalty for the man who fired him, but the more that his lawyer Shigemori (Masaharu Fukuyama) examines the case, the more he becomes convinced that Misumi is hiding something, possibly to do with the victim's daughter Sakie (Suzu Hirose).

THE THIRD MURDER is a departure for director Hirokazu Kore'eda, swapping his trademark family studies for a courtroom drama that has the trappings of a thriller. However, Kore'eda refuses to follow the conventions of that genre, opting instead for a philosophical examination of the elusive nature of truth and guilt. There's an implicit

You can't handle the truth!

criticism of Japan's justice system, where judges must stick to a schedule to maintain their reputations, and lawyers only care about winning, along with the continued use of the death penalty. As Misumi, Yakusho makes an unlikely murderer, unfailingly polite even as he constantly changes his version of events. The film hangs on the interplay between lawyer and defendant, with the camera often imposing the reflection of one over the face of the other to suggest the link between the pair. The supporting cast is less well developed, particularly Sakie, who's central to the story but given so little depth she might as well be called "Vulnerable Girl".

It's fascinating to see Kore'eda put his distinct spin on a courtroom drama, but his determination to express his theme that truth is ephemeral and subsequent refusal to resolve the mystery take some of the sting out of the tale. ●

★★★★★

WORDS BY MICHAEL DODSON



SUSHI STRIKER: THE WAY OF SUSHIDO

OUT NOW // 7 // ACTION, PUZZLE // £39.99 (SWITCH), £34.99 (3DS) // PUBLISHER NINTENDO // DEVELOPER NINTENDO EPD, INDIESZERO

PLOT In a fishless land, where the Republic has long battled the Empire for control over the world's sushi supply, a child named Musashi steps up to the plate to fight for the right to sushi for all.

If you're left scratching your head at the plot of *Sushi Striker*, don't worry – its premise is as delightfully bonkers as it sounds, and though you don't often hear about stories in puzzlers, this one perfectly sets the scene for the game's high-speed, madcap action – though the pace of the game is, admittedly, interrupted by a few too many cut scenes early on.



Each level of *Sushi Striker* sees the protagonist facing off against an opponent to create the biggest piles of sushi plates, which can then be thrown at them as weapons. In order to build your stacks, you must link chains of same coloured plates that whizz across the screen in front of you on conveyor belts. Though this may seem simple at first, enemies quickly ramp up in difficulty, and the various special skills and powers each one possesses does a great job of keeping the game feeling fresh throughout its roughly ten-hour campaign.

Like any good puzzler, *Sushi Striker* soon becomes just as moreish as the bitesize fishy morsels of its title, the temptation of 'just one more level' being very difficult to resist!

An inventive take on tried and tested colour matching puzzle games, *Sushi Striker* is a surprise hit! ●

★★★★★

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WIN 2 COLLECTOR'S EDITIONS OF FLIP FLAPPERS

THIS ISSUE, THANKS to those kind folks over at MVM Entertainment, we have two copies of the collector's edition of *Flip Flappers* to give away. Priced at £80, this luxury set with Blu-ray discs comes packaged in an art box with art cards, a book mark, and a hefty 288 page book.

Flip Flappers tells the story of the seemingly normal high schooler Cocona, who becomes member of the organisation FlipFlap, and is able to turn at will into a magical girl persona. Travelling with her new friend and partner Papika, the pair venture into the alternate dimension Pure Illusion in order to seek out crystal shards! With a unique style and a new take on the already now-innovative magical girl genre, *Flip Flappers* is sure to take you on a journey you'll never forget. With a thrilling story that is teased out over the span of the show, this is a show that unabashedly expects you to accept its eccentricities – just like its kooky heroines!

If want to win a copy of the collector's edition of *Flip Flappers*, all you have to do is answer the following question correctly to be entered into our prize draw.

WHICH OF THESE IS THE NAME FOR THE ALTERNATE DIMENSION VISITED IN THE SHOW?

- A) PURE SHORES**
- B) PURE ILLUSION**
- C) PURE AND SIMPLE**

You can enter by emailing your answer along with your name and address to neomagcomp@gmail.com, with the subject header NEO 178 *Flip Flappers* competition. Alternatively, you can enter by sending the correct answer on the back of a postcard, along with your address, to the Uncooked Media editorial address printed on page 084.

Closing date: 16 August

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No correspondence will be entered into. No employees of Uncooked Media or the companies providing the prizes may enter. No cash alternative is offered to these prizes. Entries are only valid if they reach us by the closure date. Multiple entries will be disregarded. The publisher's decision is final. Good luck!



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[ANIME REVIEW]

BIG FISH & BEGONIA

China's Spirited Away

OUT NOW // MANGA ENTERTAINMENT // PG // FANTASY // £15.99 (BLU-RAY), £12.99 (DVD) // 105 MINS

PLOT Chun, a teenage girl from a magic underworld kingdom, visits the world of humans and causes the death of a heroic boy. Stricken with guilt and grief, Chun makes a forbidden pact to resurrect the boy as a fish in her kingdom...

This isn't anime – it's a remarkably lavish Chinese fantasy that makes a fascinating contrast with the recent *Mary and the Witch's Flower*. Both *Mary* and *Big Fish* are extremely Ghibli-ish fantasies, but whereas *Mary* is affable family fare, *Big Fish* evokes the unnervingly mad, weird side of Ghibli.

Specifically, *Big Fish* goes for the crazy fantasy of *Spirited Away*. It's nearly all set in a magic realm under our world. A non-human girl, Chun, falls in forbidden love with a human, and strives to rescue him when he drowns (pure *Little Mermaid*). Chun resurrects the boy as a fish in her world, a prohibited act that might destroy the world.

In the film's cycle of tragedy, multiple characters sacrifice themselves for a person or people they love. The one (apparently) villainous character is great fun, but she's incidental to the cycle, and simply vanishes before the climax. Wait through the end credits, as a crucial epilogue scene takes the cycle to a higher level.

Chun's world has huge fish swimming in air; Biblical floods

which drown landscapes; phoenixes married to old men who turn into trees; and sinister fairy-tale denizens who command cats and rats, and who trade in human souls. (Warning: children may be upset by a brief scene of dolphins being slaughtered.)

If you've seen *Spirited Away*, then *Big Fish* will inevitably feel less boggling and a few images will feel outrageously familiar. But its vision is impressive, and richly rewards rewatching because of the strange, funny details you catch on second view, often involving background creatures and props.

The characters, though, are infuriating. They move so gracefully, yet we rarely feel their feelings. This should be a story of relationships, of a magic girl who loves a human, of another boy who silently, hopelessly loves her, and of the girl's people who also love her, but who turn against her because of her taboo-breaking choices.

But the film can't make us care for them. There are a few very touching moments, but many come just as the film is ending. Much of the story feels choppy and arbitrary, full of one-after-another incidents that don't open up the characters. *Big Fish* could be an "abridged" movie version of a longer serial, with all the essential character-building trimmed out, except that its exquisite production values are absurdly beyond TV. But...

...But we're still giving the film a generous mark, because it looks so lovely, because it's so rewatchable, and because if you do rewatch it, you'll connect with it more, despite its character and story problems. ●



EXTRAS

The home release includes the original Mandarin voice-track (subtitled) and the English-dubbed track, with familiar anime dub voices including Stephanie Sheh as the heroine Chun and Johnny Yong Bosch as Qui. Both the Blu-ray and DVD editions include a 'making-of' featurette and the original pilot film that was made to sell the concept.



HARVEST MOON: LIGHT OF HOPE SPECIAL EDITION

COLLECTOR'S EDITIONS

As well as the standard editions of the game, you can also purchase the collector's editions, which contain the full season pass, a mug, a tote bag, and a selection of adorable pin badges, all presented in a barn-shaped case!

OUT NOW // LIFE SIM // SWITCH (£34.99), PS4 (£34.99), PC (£23.79), COLLECTOR'S EDITIONS (£64.99) // PUBLISHER RISING STAR GAMES // DEVELOPER TABOT, NATSUME

PLOT To celebrate the 20th anniversary of a franchise that will have you fretting about virtual cabbages, *Harvest Moon* returns with a brand new challenge: rebuild an abandoned town and nurse your farm back to life!

The *Harvest Moon* franchise is the ultimate in addictive gameplay, and the phrase "just one more day" is a familiar one to anybody who has spent time playing on its many instalments. This latest addition to the 20-year-strong line-up encompasses elements from previous games, like the characters from *Skytree Village*, gift-giving abilities from

Seeds of Memories, and also includes brand new festivals like dog racing!

The nostalgia factor is high, and although the artwork has received justifiable criticism due to its clunky 3D integration and odd-looking characters, if you can look beyond that you'll find a decent new entry into this tried and tested life-sim genre.

As the first instalment of the franchise to appear on PC and Switch, this is a great opportunity for gamers who previously couldn't access the game to give it a go, while those who have played multiple previous incarnations may find the action a little stale at times.

Farm, fish, mine, romance, start a family, and save the village! *Harvest Moon* is back, and this time it's for Switch and the PC too! ●



WORDS BY MICHAEL DODSON



SUFFERING OF NINKO

Gynophobia: The Movie

23 JULY // THIRD WINDOW FILMS // CERT 15 // FANTASY // £19.99 (DUAL FORMAT) // 70 MINS

Ninko (Masato Tsujioka) is a Buddhist monk with a problem – he's irresistible to women, but sex is strictly forbidden. Driven out of town by the lustful local ladies, Ninko encounters a female forest spirit called Yama-onna (Miho Wakabayashi) who preys on men, draining the life from them during intercourse.

The debut feature from writer / director Norihiro Niwatsukino feels like a short film that's been heavily padded out, particularly with the abundance of slow motion sequences, overlong montages and a completely unnecessary narrator. Presumably Ninko's tale is intended to play like a magical fable, but Niwatsukino shows little grasp of mood or tone.

Third Windows' release features extras on the disc, including an in-depth interview with Niwatsukino, along with his short film *Strawberry Jam*, which swaps the sex equals death premise of *Ninko* for jam equals sex. Sticky!

The elegant animated sequences add some visual flair, but the whole premise suggests a profound fear of female sexuality. ●



MARIO TENNIS ACES

OUT NOW // PUBLISHER NINTENDO // DEVELOPER CAMELOT // CERT 3 // SPORTS // £49.99 (SWITCH)

In *Mario Tennis Aces*, Mario and the gang return to the court after the disappointing *Ultra Smash* on Wii U, this time with a variety of new techniques and a single player adventure mode.

Although this part of the game is effective in teaching players the nuances of its controls, the paper-thin story, random difficulty spikes and lacklustre rewards mean that it's really only a sideshow to where most players will likely spend the majority of their time: the glorious multiplayer modes.

It's easy to hop into matches with online opponents, and the ability to choose between no frills tennis and Aces' regular mode – an enjoyable system where you build an energy gauge to perform various special shots – is welcome.

A return to form for the *Mario Tennis* series, though only recommended if you plan on spending most of your time in multiplayer. ●





[FILM REVIEW]

WOMAN IS THE FUTURE OF MAN / TALE OF CINEMA

Angst and alienation from the arthouse

16 JULY // ARROW ACADEMY // CERT 15 // DRAMA // £24.99 (BLU-RAY) // 176 MINS

PLOT A double bill from Korean arthouse director Hong Sangsoo. In *Woman Is The Future Of Man*, two men compete for the same woman over a period of years, but neither is willing to commit. In *Tale Of Cinema*, a couple considers suicide, while an aspiring director clumsily pursues an actress.

For those who associate Korean cinema with hardboiled crime dramas and revenge thrillers, Hong Sangsoo's exercises in existentialist angst may come as a surprise. Hong's movies look and feel like filmed stage plays with their minimal editing, single-shot scenes and the reliance on dialogue rather than imagery to tell the story. He's also only really interested in his male characters. Women are there to be competed over, as objects to be possessed, but with no agency or inner lives of their own.

Woman Is The Future Of Man is particularly disinterested in the female lead, Seonhwa (Sung Hyun-ah), despite the fact that she is starting point for the plot when old friends and rivals Mun-ho (Yu Ji-tae) and Hyeong-gon (Kim Tae-woo) drunkenly decide to track down their old flame from college. The most telling incident comes after Seonhwa has been raped, but Hyeong-gon insists on having sex with her to, in his

words, "cleanse her." She has no overt reaction to either event.

"Koreans are too fond of sex," complains Mun-ho. "They have nothing better to do. There's no real culture." Yet Hong's characters have one awkward, unsatisfying sexual encounter after another, and the men, in particular, are all thoroughly unlikeable. Terrified of commitment and responsibility, they stumble from one woman to another, unable to form a meaningful connection with any of them, which seems to be the point but it's hardly very energizing to watch.

Tale Of Cinema almost feels like a misnomer for the second film here. Released in Korea in 2005, it's just as uncinematic as its predecessor, notable for the exceptionally clumsy use of zoom lenses. The first 40 minutes is the unhappy story of Sang-won (Lee Ki-woo) and Yeong-shil (Uhm Ji-won) trying and failing to commit suicide together. This turns out to be a film within the film, which is supplanted by Dong-soo (Kim Sang-kyung), an unsuccessful film director, chasing after Yeong-shil, the actress from the film about the suicide pact. Once again, Hong is only interested in the men, and it is baffling why Yeong-shil should ever give Dong-soo the time of day when he's such a creep and has nothing to offer but disappointment.

This pair of movies showcase a side of Korean cinema little screened here in the UK, but the absence of likeable characters and Hong's apparent disinterest in plot and film language don't make for easy viewing. Arthouse shouldn't mean inaccessible. ●

★★★★★

EXTRAS

The Blu-ray contains introductions from Martin Scorsese (very brief) and Tony Rayns (very verbose), cast interviews, trailers, still galleries, and the *Making Of Woman Is The Future Of Man*.



[ANIME REVIEW]

FOOD WARS SEASON 2: THE SECOND PLATE

13 AUGUST // MANGA ENTERTAINMENT // 15 // COMEDY // £29.99 (DVD), £39.99 (BLU-RAY) // 325 MINS // 13 EPISODES

PLOT It's out of the frying pan and into the fire for Yukihura Soma as the next round of the Autumn Elections get underway! Tohoku Culinary Academy's top student chefs put their skills to the test as they (food) fight for the gold medal.

Food Wars Season 2 takes no time getting to the main course as it jumps straight into a high-stakes cooking tournament, dedicating each episode to a one-on-one battle of delectable dishes. But the mouth-watering recipes, all of which also sound plausible enough to work in reality, are only half the charm.

The real beauty lies in the continued absurdity of the reactions the judges are having to those recipes. Between the surreal cutaways and clothes-ripping foodgasms, the show hasn't lost any of that laugh out loud charm that makes it completely unique among its peers.

However once the tournament is said and done, the series does begin to lose its focus, hastily moving onto the next arc even though there's barely any running time left. This results in a handful of decent character moments as Yukihura continues to enhance his culinary skills, but it's a drastic change of pace that ends the series on a whimper rather than the bang it deserves.

Despite running out of steam at the final hurdle, *Food Wars'* second season still features the mouth-watering visuals and over the top approach everyone loved about its first. Just be sure not to watch on an empty stomach! ●



WORDS BY MITCHELL LINEHAM



TRIVIA

Food Wars' iconic cutaways make reference to many other popular shows, including *Ultraman*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure*. Which ones can you spot?



[ANIME REVIEW]

DIGIMON ADVENTURE TRI. 5: COEXISTENCE

30 JULY // MANGA UK // PG // ACTION, COMEDY // £15.99 (DVD), £19.99 (BLU-RAY) // 88 MINS

PLOT Following on from the events of *Loss*, *Coexistence* sees the Digi-destined and their partner Digimon back at full strength after the latter's rebirth and memory loss. *Loss* is the movie series' weakest entry, but now it's back to fast-paced action and more intrigue in the penultimate movie.

Coexistence takes full advantage of having the original gang back together, and does what *Digimon* does best – it mixes action, heart-warming relationships, comedy and mystery and ramps it up to ten. Taking the adventure to the real world, where the public is widely aware of the existence of



Digimon, opens up so many avenues which *Coexistence* explores with gusto.

Things are at their worst for the Digimon, and those who've been with the series since their childhood may get a little emotional, but it's entirely worthy of being *Adventure*'s successor. It's lovely seeing the main cast have fun and be kids, telling scary stories and cracking jokes, before getting to the action-packed and intense climax where they have to take responsibility on behalf of all Digimon.

Coexistence is one of *tri*'s strongest entries and it does a lot of exciting things with the series. It sets up the final movie, *Future*, excellently with a shocking final note and the promise that this will be the Digi-destined's greatest adventure yet. ●



CHASE YOUR CHILDHOOD DREAMS

Many of the Japanese voice-actors and actresses who replaced the previous talent are self-proclaimed big fans of the series, and they grew up with the show.



[ANIME REVIEW]

LOVE, CHUNIBYO AND OTHER DELUSIONS! THE MOVIE: RIKKA VERSION

30 JULY // MANGA UK // 12 // COMEDY, SLICE OF LIFE // £19.99 (DVD), £24.99 (BLU-RAY) // 96 MINS

PLOT *Love, Chunibyo and Other Delusions! The Movie: Rikka Version* shows viewers the first season through the eyes of Rikka rather than Yuta's. You might be a little lost if you've not watched the series!

Rikka Version hits all of the major story beats of the series, but it does so blisteringly fast that there's little character development to speak of. It does exist, and fans should enjoy this fresh take on the series, but don't go in thinking that you can

watch this in replacement of the series – this is a fun addition for those yearning for more from *Chunibyo*.

The notable side characters are still present, but they receive very little screen time because, as expected, this movie is mostly about Rikka and Yuta. It's a shame, as the cast as a whole bring out the best in *Chunibyo*, especially as the main character's development is strongly tied to the development of everyone else, but it's still funny and endearing. The opening of the movie is fantastic and takes us into the creative imagination of Rikka once more, for a wicked wedding-themed battle.

This feature may not include much new content, but it's a beautiful movie which is worth your time if you're a fan. ●

★★★★★

WORDS BY JACOB BONIFACE

[ANIME REVIEW]



THE ASTERISK WAR PART 1

Asterisk-y business!

6 AUGUST // MVM // TBC // ACTION, HAREM // £29.99 (DVD), £34.99 (BLU-RAY) // 300 MINS // 12 EPISODES

PLOT Ayato Amagiri has a lot on his plate: after embarrassing himself on his first day at Seidoukan Academy, his quest to track down his missing sister – and manage to keep from getting killed – just got a little bit more difficult!

There's certainly a lot of familiar fare right from the outset of *The Asterisk War*. From protagonist Ayato's dark-haired and slender character design to the quartet of eligible bachelorettes who all seem to want his romantic attention, there's a good chance you'll be scratching your head as you start to watch the series, wondering if you've already watched it someplace before.

But is this a case of unoriginality, or just a series that takes an 'if it ain't broke...' approach to storytelling?

The true answer is somewhere in the middle. While it's tough to find an element of *The Asterisk War* that *hasn't* been used before in a more well-known series, the show does still have its moments. These usually come in the form of the well-executed and flamboyant battle scenes, which are brought to life by the always-skilful A-1 Pictures. The rest of the series is definitely derivative, but the art and action might be enough to keep things interesting for fans of similar series.

It probably won't go down in history as one of the greats, but *The Asterisk War* does still have the odd glimmer of brilliance in amongst the tropes and fanservice that make up the rest of the series. ●

★★★★★

SPIN-OFFS

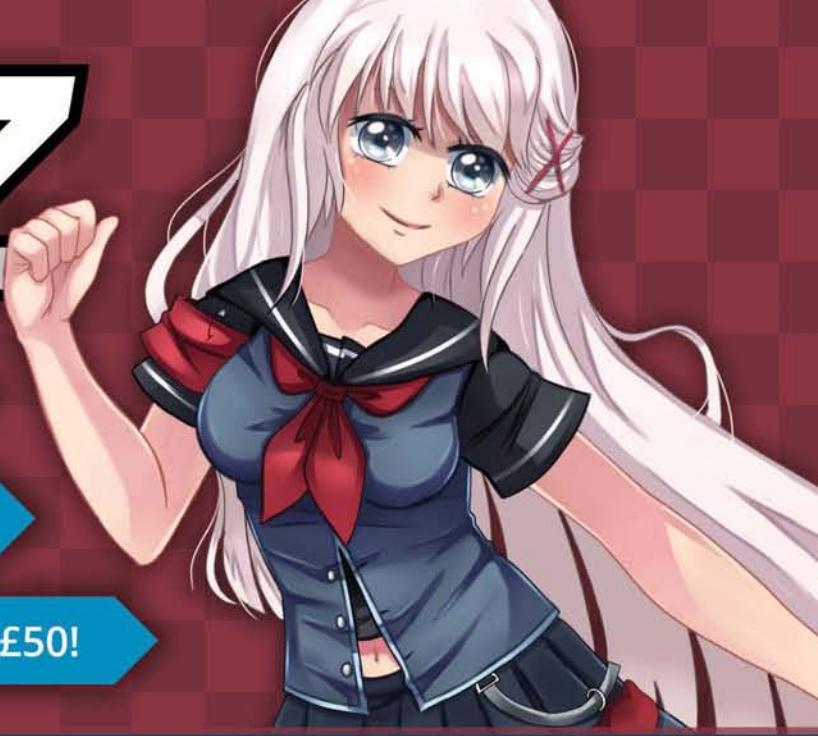
Despite the relatively short run of the anime, the franchise itself has a number of spin-offs, including novels, manga, and an action/visual novel game, released in 2016.

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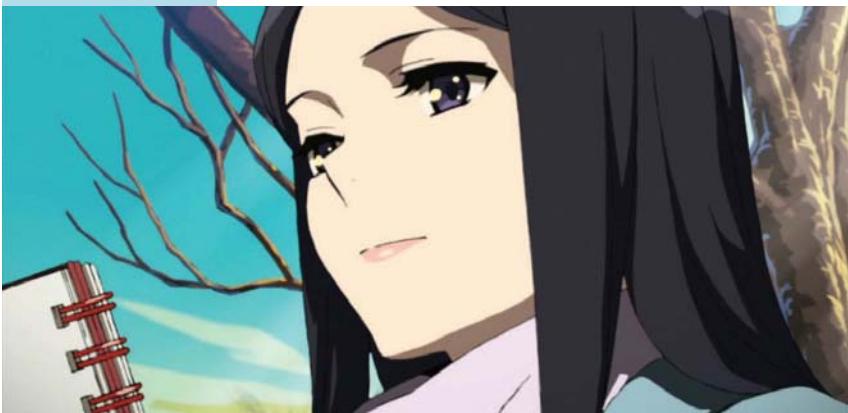
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[ANIME REVIEW]

OCCULTIC;NINE PART 2

After that twist

OUT NOW // MANGA ENTERTAINMENT // 15 // MYSTERY, HORROR, COMEDY // £24.99 (BLU-RAY), £19.99 (DVD) // 130 MINS // 6 EPISODES

PLOT Gamon's occult investigations have been derailed by a devastating discovery. Meanwhile, a new detective is examining the corpses retrieved from the Tokyo lake, and an "Emperor" awaits rebirth as the ruler of the world.

Occultic;Nine was hard to get into, with motormouth dialogue, a grotesquely-designed girl character and a shrieky otaku "hero." But if you enjoyed the first volume for its loony mysteries and tangy plotting, you'll find the second half satisfying as entertainment, if not as story.

The shock twist that ended volume one moves things along nicely. Now there's a new investigator on the scene, a girl with

handy psychic powers who connects to the other characters, even the dead ones. We also get answers, surprisingly quickly, as to what the show's crazy conspiracy is about. But it's not all exposition (though there is a lot). There's an exciting underground confrontation with an axe-murdering devil child, and there's time to force the obnoxious otaku Gamon onto a hero's journey.

Occultic isn't for viewers seeking the lingering, drawn-out emotions of sensitive anime like *Maquia* or *Silent Voice*. The series needs at least one more episode than it has; it ends in a mad dash to beat the baddies that barely wraps up the characters' journeys, leaves questions strewn unanswered, and sacrifices the earlier suggestions of deeper social satire. It's a plot-heavy shambles, but it's still fun.

An enjoyable acid-house remix of *Durarara!!*, *Serial Experiments Lain* and dark fantasy which lightens up. ●

★★★★★

WORDS BY ALEX JONES

[ANIME REVIEW]

SWORD ORATORIA: IS IT WRONG TO TRY TO PICK UP GIRLS IN A DUNGEON? ON THE SIDE

27 AUGUST // MVM ENTERTAINMENT // TBC // ADVENTURE // £29.99 (DVD), £34.99 (BLU-RAY), £79.99 (COMBI COLLECTORS EDITION) // 300 MINS // 12 EPISODES

PLOT It's *Is It Wrong To Try To Pick Up Girls In A Dungeon?*, but not as you remember! This side story runs parallel to the main series, focusing on the Loki Familia and their "Sword Princess".

Given the popularity of this show, a second season seemed almost certain. However, *Sword Oratoria* unfortunately probably isn't what fans were hoping for. While the focus on a relatively untapped cast offers a fresh perspective, none of the characters

present feel strong enough to carry a full series. Ais frequently feels like the side character in her own story, juggling the spotlight with fledgling elf mage Lefiya whose cliche "insecure team member" arc is nothing that hasn't been done better elsewhere.

More confusingly, despite the hook seemingly being its connectivity with the main series, *Sword Oratoria* actually takes far too long to get to that point, more content with struggling along with its own plot threads that don't have enough time to develop properly. The action set pieces are enough to spike interest now and again, but are sadly few and far between.

With a significantly weaker cast and story than the original, even big fans may find themselves struggling here. ●

★★★★★

KEY TALENT

God of Mischief Loki here is voiced by Yurika Kubo, who anime fans will probably know best as Hanayo Koizumi in the original *Love Live!* series.

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FIVE TOP TIPS For First Class Cosplay

Follow in the footsteps of Donna Starling, a cosplay master, as she lays out the essential playbook for creating your best cosplay ever!

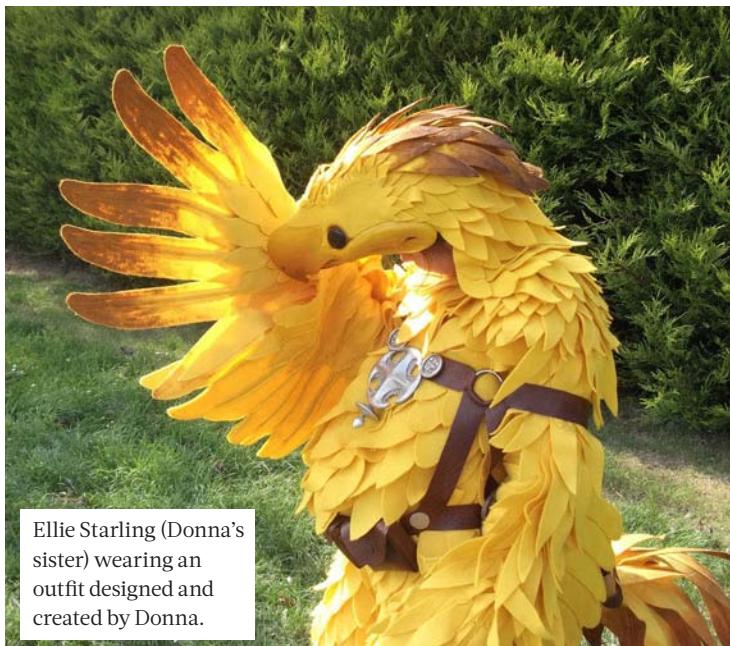
TO THE EVERYDAY person, Donna Starling is a 35-year-old IT worker from West Berkshire. However, to the *Final Fantasy XIV* community, which spans over 10 million players across the globe, she's recognised for her expert cosplay skills. From her notoriously eye-catching and detailed Fat Chocobo outfit to a rather impressive Bahamut, Donna has made a name for herself by recreating her favourite *Final Fantasy* character outfits to dazzle at events and fan gatherings.

Donna has shared her top tips on how to make a first-class outfit to best represent your favourite fictional characters for any event or photoshoot!

1. You must love what you're making

The outfits that have turned out best for me are for the characters I know and absolutely love such Fat Chocobo and Bahamut. In the past, I've made costumes for friends and their children for school plays (Victorian or Shakespearean themed for instance) and I simply didn't enjoy the process or end result. You are more likely to invest more time, effort and attention to detail if you have a genuine love for the character.

2. You don't need to spend an arm and leg to create an impressive look – hardware stores are your best friend
I've spoken to cosplayers from around the world and am astounded at the amount some have spent on outfits. Some people have spent over £1,000 on materials like expensive thermo-plastic sheets and other specialist materials. There are plenty of low cost or even free alternatives. There's an abundance of material everywhere you look, whether it's from charity shops, car boot sales or rummaging around cupboards in the house. To give you a flavour, the more solid parts of all my cosplays are made from cereal boxes, newspaper and PVA glue; so keep hold of old cereal boxes and newspapers. Hardware stores also stock inexpensive building materials that are handy, like wire and expanding foam that can create solid pieces. Flexible filler is a great low cost surface primer; using it, you can get a smooth surface that will not crack or flake off easily – good for busy events like Final Fantasy Fan Festival or Comic Con, when you might get bumped around a little!



3. Know your character

I recommend that you have plenty of source material of your chosen character – get as many angles as possible so there are plenty of reference points. Try and figure out how it will work logically. Even if you are doing an original design or Gijinka style in which you are aiming to create your own interpretation of a character or creature, having source images will help you create the key elements that identify it. For unusual or bulky costumes, you also need to know which positions you're comfortable holding. I normally stand against a wall and ask someone to draw around me onto paper to get a good idea of scale and posture I'll need to hold, and use it as a template.

4. Experiment with materials and processes

See what works best for you and if you are new to a material, don't be disheartened if it goes wrong first time. The first time I used expanding foam it was a total disaster. Online tutorials are great to find new ways of doing things. I learnt how to use a rolled-hem foot on my sewing machine (I can't sew for beans!) by watching a YouTube video and then practicing with scraps of material. You'll also find that learning new skills suddenly gives you even more ideas of cosplays that you can now create.

5. Break your outfit down into simple parts

Outfits from fantastical RPG games are often very detailed and have lots of components – it can be overwhelming to know where to start. The best thing to do is to use simple shapes to work out how to create your base and then add detail from there. The Fat Chocobo is essentially three "ball" parts; I bought a gym ball for Fat Chocobo's head and worked around it with Papier-maché. I used plastic hoops inside a big fabric equivalent of a beach ball to create the body and another smaller one for the neck. All that was needed then was the details: beak, wings, the tail, and of course the feet!

For more amazing creations, find Donna at facebook.com/ChocoboCosplay.

Donna's husband David Starling
wearing a Bahamut costume,
also designed and created by
Donna. Photo: Linda Mitchell.







[ANIME REVIEW]

INITIAL D LEGEND 3: DREAM

Boys love cars, don't they?

23 JUNE // MVM // 12 // ACTION // £19.99 (DVD), £24.99 (BLU-RAY) // 64 MINS // 12 EPISODES

PLOT It's showdown time on Mount Akina as the two hottest racers in Gunma prefecture – Ryosuke Takahashi and Takumi Fujiwara – go head-to-head in a high-speed battle to determine once and for all who's the best. Takumi has the talent and technique to win, but can he hold his nerve under pressure?

Initial D is over 20 years old now, but animators continue to revisit Shuichi Shigeno's racing manga. *Initial D Legend 3: Dream* is the final instalment of the three-part reboot of the franchise that goes back to the start of the manga series, showing how Takumi goes from tofu deliveryman to local racing hero.

Despite the fact that the entire premise is about illegal street racing, the movie opens with a polite request that everyone watching it should drive responsibly. Ha. Thereafter it's all squealing tyres, roaring engines, and drifts galore.

It's very clearly aimed at gearheads and the script is full of references to different car models and performance factors which is mana for the car lovers out there but that will likely sail by the casual viewer. It's a bit like the technobabble in mecha shows: you don't have to understand it to enjoy the action.

The race scenes are the main selling point here, which is fortunate as the characters are decidedly flat. Takumi is clearly supposed to have ice in his veins, indicative of his ability to hold his composure at high speeds, but mostly he comes across as bored and disinterested. Given that he's supposed to be this racing prodigy, there's not much passion on display.

Even worse is Natsuki, his girlfriend. "You have a goal?" she says with evident wonder in her voice. "I sure wish I had one of those too." It doesn't help that the camera is constantly on the verge of peeking up her skirt or down her top, but then she's clearly just there to look pretty while sounding as vapid as possible. "Boys love cars, don't they?" she observes with searing insight.

She's not the only one lumbered with clunky dialogue. The crowd that gathers to watch the big race has to deliver the most unwieldy exposition, delivering lines like "A battle to the very limit that only these two could wage!" as if it's the most natural thing in the world. Likewise, it seems more effort went into animating the cars than the drivers. In the big race, at times it's hard to tell who you're looking at in the close-ups.

Director Tomohito Naka seems much more comfortable handling automobiles than human beings, and it would make the action scenes much more intense if only the characters were a little more memorable. Come for the racing, stay for the racing. ●



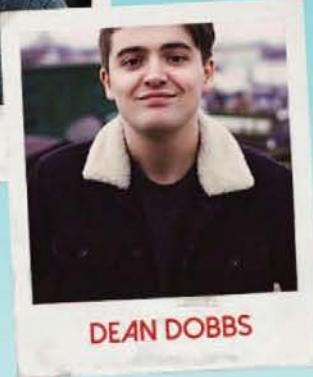
KEY TALENT

Ryosuke is voiced in the Japanese dub by Daisuke Ono. The prolific Mr Ono's roles include Jotaro in *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* and the demonic manservant Sebastian in *Black Butler*.

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WORDS BY ANDREW OSMOND

NEO RELEASE ROUND-UP

THE STATE OF THE UK MARKET THIS MONTH

IT LOOKS LIKE the blazing summer heat has got to the anime industry. Well, it's blazing heat as of writing; apologies if it's torrential downpours and occasional snow by the time you read this. After a frighteningly busy couple of months, the companies are having a bit of breather, doing re-releases and carrying on with established long-runners.

MVM's upcoming titles include a DVD of *Nobunaga the Fool* on 23 July, followed around the end of August by a Blu-ray / DVD Collector's combi edition of the heftily-named *Sword Oratoria; Is it wrong to try to pick up girls in a dungeon? On the Side*, due out on the 27th. You can read our review in this issue; it'll have separate Blu-ray and DVD editions in October.

For anyone looking to plunge into the many-stranded multiverse of *Fate/stay night*, on 13 August there'll be a standard Blu-ray of the *Unlimited Bladeworks* TV series (season one), where a magic student is enmeshed in a terrible magic war. The same day sees the unusual, nay eccentric fantasy *Flip Flappers* on standard DVD (a standard Blu-ray follows on 3 September). Head to page 066 of this issue to find out how to win yourself a collector's edition, worth £80!

Then there's the girls-plus-motorbikes show *Bakuon!*, which you can read about in our preview this issue (see page 008), and which comes to Blu-ray and DVD on 20 August.

Manga Entertainment, meanwhile, is releasing more *Pokémon*, in a four-film DVD collection subtitled *Black & White* on 23 July. Part 5 of the *Digimon Adventure Tri* saga comes out on 30 July as a DVD and a Collectors Blu-ray – see our review this issue, and our thoughts on *Dragon Ball Super* part 4, on Blu-ray and DVD on 6 August. The eighteenth DVD collection of *One Piece* sails in on 20 August, taking us nearly to part 450 of Luffy's exploits.

Love. Chunibyo and Other Delusions! The Movie: Rikka Version hits Blu-ray and DVD on 30 July and is reviewed this issue. 6 August sees *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* on both standard Blu-ray and DVD, following the hefty limited collector's edition. The standard editions are



1. Asking the important questions, like: is it wrong to try to pick up girls in a dungeon?
2. *Love. Chunibyo and Other Delusions! The Movie: Rikka Version*, still not even the longest title we've ever had.
3. *One Piece* is very moreish, isn't it? Good job really...
4. Get ready for a four part *Pokémon* picture pack!

SAILING JULY 20TH 2018

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[FILM REVIEW]

DETECTIVE BUREAU 2-3:

Go To Hell Bastards!

OUT NOW // ARROW VIDEO // CERT 12 // THRILLER // £24.99 (BLU-RAY) // 88 MINS

PLOT When a shipment of guns is stolen from the US Army in Japan, private detective Tajima (Jo Shishido) offers his services to the police to track them down. Going undercover in a yakuza syndicate, he faces constant suspicion from boss Hatano (Kinzo Shin) while attracting his girlfriend Chiaki (Reiko Sassamori).

Detective Bureau 2-3: *Go To Hell Bastards!* was the first of four films that director Seijun Suzuki made for Nikkatsu Studios in 1963, alongside his wayward teen drama *The Incorrigible* and two more crime thrillers, *Youth Of The Beast* and *Kanto Wanderer* (the latter inexplicably still unreleased in the UK!).

Detective Bureau 2-3 is one of the more conventional outings from Suzuki as the director tends to play closer to the rules of the crime thriller here than he would later on. The movie features a mixture of comedy, action and musical numbers in a bid to offer a complete entertainment package, although Suzuki struggles to make some of the material work.

Leading man Jo Shishido famously had cosmetic surgery in 1957 to fill out his cheeks and he looks particularly odd here in colour, like he's a part-human, part-hamster hybrid smuggling some sunflower seeds back to his nest. The script

requires him to join in for one of the musical numbers, but he doesn't have much of a singing voice when he attempts to duet with his old flame Sally (Naomi Hoshi) during her nightclub act.

The song and dance numbers without Shishido's participation tend to be more successful, but the same can't be said for the comedy side of the film. Much of that lies in the hands of Kotoe Hatsui, who plays an unscrupulous gossip magazine editor who works with Tajima, and Hiroshi Hijikata, who seems to work for both of them in some hazily undefined, general capacity. There's no wit to their dialogue and the comic relief scenes consistently fall flat on their faces despite Kotoe Hatsui's constant mugging. In Suzuki's defence, the rest of the movie is handled with a light touch and the mood is consistently playful.

In spite of the plot about stolen guns and regular shootouts between rival yakuza clans, *Detective Bureau 2-3* is not a hardboiled noir thriller. The gun fights are completely bloodless with the actors usually clutching their stomach and sliding to the ground in feigned agony – in that regard it's not the precursor to a John Woo heroic bloodshed film by any stretch of the imagination.

Some of the later scenes see Suzuki and cinematographer Shigeyoshi Mine start to play with the expressionistic use of colour, but they would quickly become more daring by the end of 1963 with *Kanto Wanderer*, which features some wonderfully theatrical flourishes in shooting and staging, including a set that drops away during a climactic

KEY TALENT

In addition to his frequent collaborations with Suzuki, cinematographer Shigeyoshi Mine shot Ko Nakahira's *Crazed Fruit*, the infamous 1956 film that embodied the taiyozoku – flaming youth – teen subculture.



showdown to reveal a dramatic red background behind it. However, there are some hints of the artistic direction that Suzuki was heading in which are evident here in *Detective Bureau 2-3*, including clever use of objects in the foreground to create frames within the frame, and using light and shadow to cast geometric shapes on the backgrounds.

"IN SPITE OF THE PLOT ABOUT STOLEN GUNS AND REGULAR SHOOTOUTS BETWEEN RIVAL YAKUZA CLANS, *Detective Bureau 2-3* IS NOT A HARDBOILED NOIR THRILLER."

Likewise, all the musical performances in the film are motivated by what's happening on screen – Sally is a nightclub entertainer, so it makes perfect sense that she's singing and dancing, even if the lyrics to her songs are pointedly aimed at the philandering Tajima. Compare that to 1966's *Tokyo Drifter*, in which the lead character Tetsuya, played by Tetsuya Watari, sings his own theme song in accompaniment to the music on the soundtrack in a direct parody of the wandering hero motif epitomised at Nikkatsu Studios by actors like Akira Kobayashi.

Suzuki's crime films are very much a man's world. Chiaki spends quite a bit of time on the screen and is

important to the plot, adding an element of jealousy to Hatano's inherent mistrust of Tajima, but her personality is barely a rough sketch, never mind a portrait. Reiko Sassamori almost sleepwalks through her performance – in one scene Tajima and Chiaki are trapped in a basement full of burning oil, but she hardly bats an eyelid when faced with the prospect of being burned alive. Naomi Hoshi fares better as Sally, giving the dancer a cheeky sense of humour and flare for the dramatic, literally swooning when Tajima turns on the charm. Again, this is the more conventional side of Suzuki's Nikkatsu films. Chiaki may be underdeveloped, but she easily fits the bill of the standard pretty gangster's moll who falls for the hero. In *Kanto Wanderer*, on the other hand, the hero rebuffs the advances of the young beauty who falls for him, instead pursuing an older woman who seems plain and disinterested in his advances. Even odder is the character that Jo Shishido went on to play in 1967's *Branded To Kill*, in which he portrays a hitman who is only sexually aroused by the smell of cooking rice. That, of course, was the film that got Suzuki fired by Nikkatsu Studios for being too weird and very nearly spelled the end of his movie career.

The director manages to inject some colour and energy into the bog-standard screenplay by Iwao Yamazaki, and it's a shame that Naomi Hoshi doesn't have a bigger role. In the grand scheme of Suzuki's prolific time at Nikkatsu, *Detective Bureau 2-3: Go To Hell Bastards!* is a dependable gangland potboiler. ●

✿✿✿✿

1. Cut me off, will you? I'll tell you when I've had enough! 2. Never a dull moment when you're undercover in the yakuza. 3. And that's why Chiaki was banned from the hairdresser's for ever and ever. 4. A great composition from cinematographer Shigeyoshi Mine.

IF YOU LIKE THIS

Arrow has released plenty of classic Suzuki in the UK, including *The Early Years* Vols. 1 and 2, and *Branded To Kill*, while Eureka has *Youth Of The Beast*.

NEXT ISSUE



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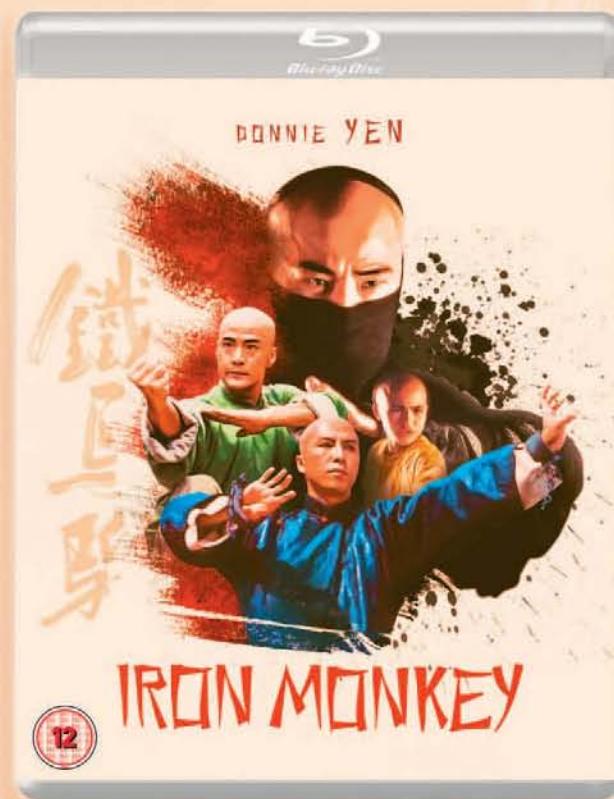
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MANGA EXTRACT

HER IMPACT!

By Mikel Miles (writer) and Lavender Khan (editor)

THIS ISSUE WE have an extract of *Her Impact!*, which starts on the following page. “*Her Impact!* is about an African Japanese single mother who was raised in Canada,” Mikel Miles told us.

“Her goal is to become a famous boxer just like her Japanese father since she was little. But she faces many challenges as a single mother and kind of gives up on the idea to pursue her childhood dream. This story covers her challenges and how she gets an opportunity to try boxing, and then how she keeps on going forward with everyone’s help.”

We asked Miles to tell us what inspired him to put together this tale. “When I saw that there is a lack of female leadership and diversity in manga and anime, I thought of writing something that has a different vibe to the typical setting,” he told us. “I wanted to write about a female character that does not have to end up settling down with the main lead; rather, portray her as a strong independent woman who wishes to pursue her dream. This is how I ended with Sadie Hiroshi, an amazing, strong woman!”

“Female empowerment is a very serious topic that, in my opinion, is not talked about enough in this kind of content, like you rarely see anything about it in the manga and anime [world]. So, I wanted to talk about it to inspire females that they can do whatever they want. They are strong and independent and they can be their own girl boss!” It also helps that Miles is a boxing fan, and integrating these two passions resulted in the pages to follow.

Meanwhile, Khan was enthusiastic about working as editor with the team. “It was a dream come true, honestly,” she said. “I really wanted to be part of a manga community and try to work on some projects, so I am glad that I am working with this amazing team. Everyone is just so talented and it is inspiring me to learn animation and write unique stories.”

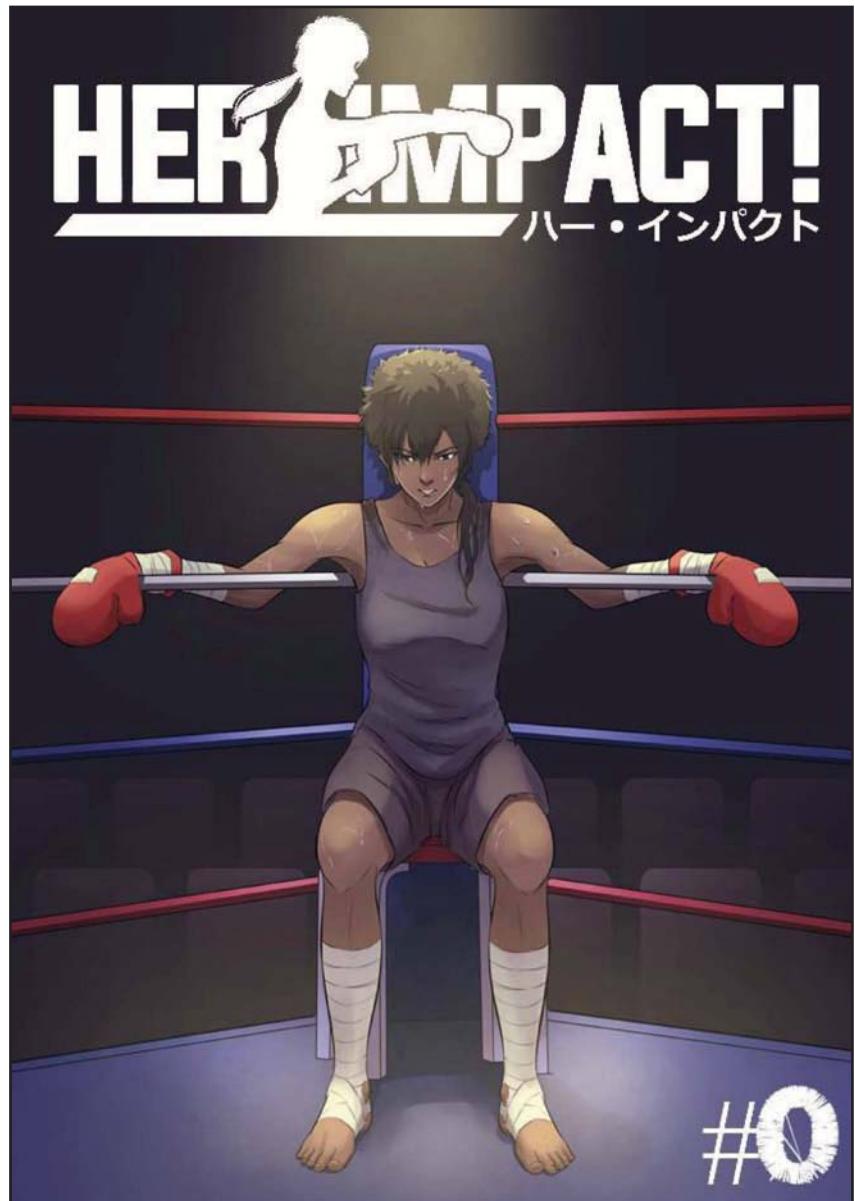
We asked the pair what the last manga they finished reading was. “*Psycho-Pass* and *Gangsta-Cursed*,” Miles told us. “But I’m currently reading *Primus 7* on *Noir Caesar*.” Khan added, “I currently am reading *Kuroshitsuji* (*Black Butler*) and *Shiki*. I read whatever catches my attention, and I am not limited to a genre. I check Pinterest and if something with cool dialogue comes up, I immediately go look it up and start reading it.”

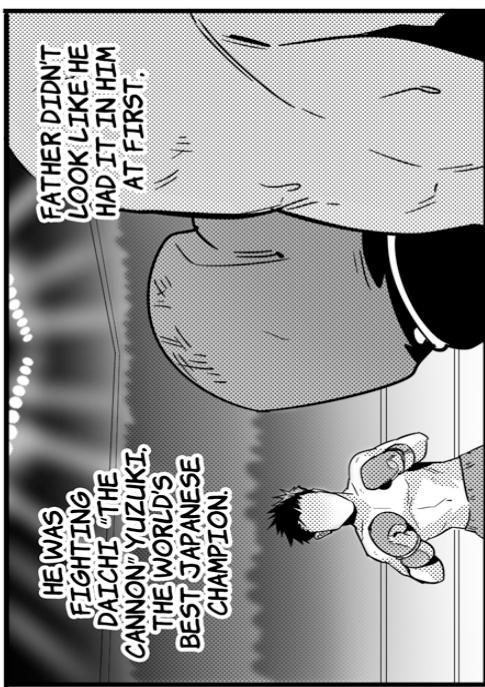
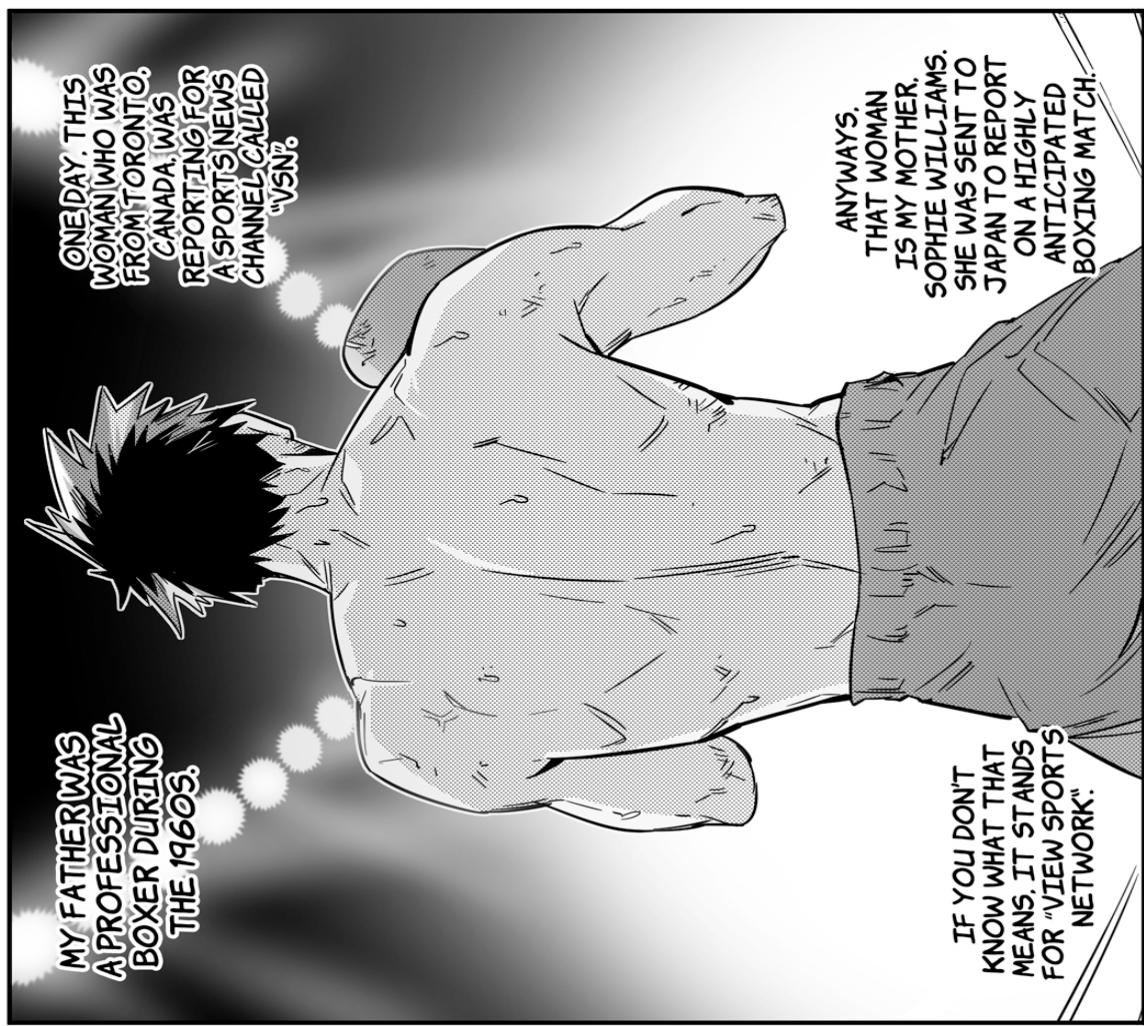
We also asked Miles what other projects he’s working on. “I have another manga called *Samurai Shin*. I have a few other projects in mind as well, but right now, I am focusing on *Samurai Shin* and *Her Impact!*.”

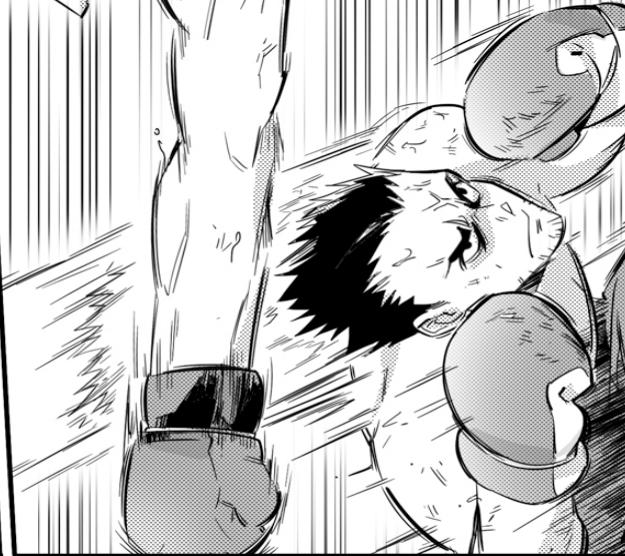
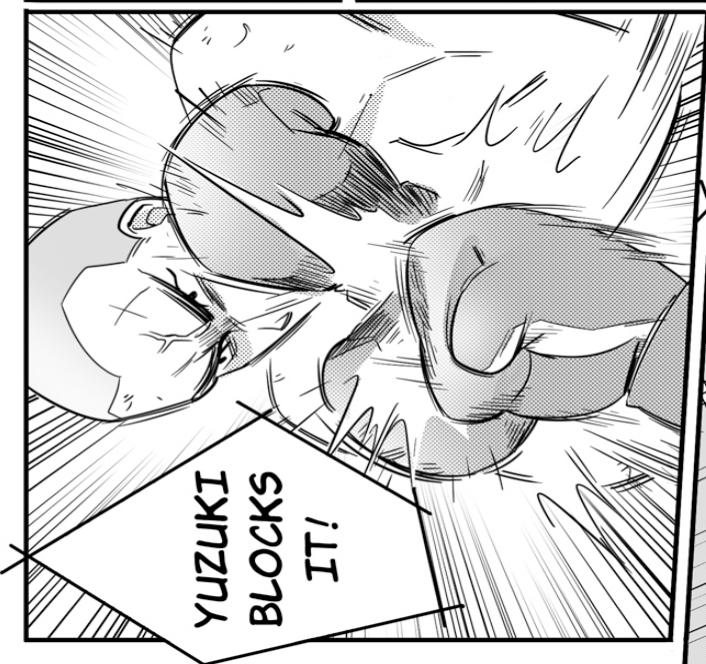
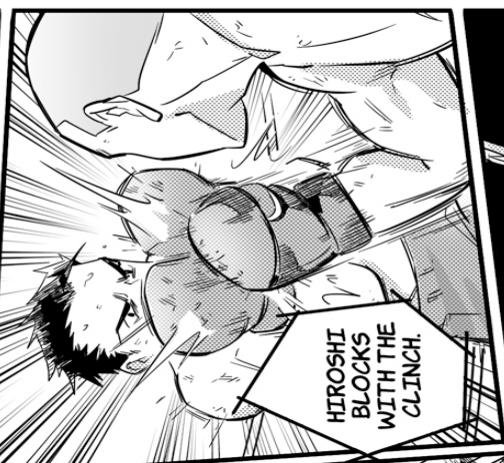
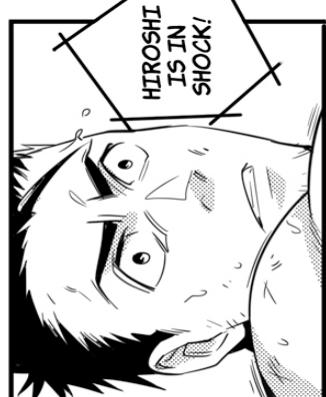
Find *Her Impact!* online at ComixCentral.com and Mangarock.com.

Finally, Miles wanted to share these shout outs with us. “I want to thank the people that worked with me on these projects here. Digitkame, Ivan Aguilar, Sukma Agustriyana, Fahmi Fauzi, Jason Noromor, Lavender Khan, TY Smith, Harley Dela Cruz, Ben Chuck and Mazumaro have worked so hard. Also, shout out to websites that support diversity: *PeepGameComix*, *ComixCentral*, *NoirCeasar*, *Indiecomix*, *Saturday-Am* and others.”

Turn the page to start reading the extract!







HE HAD HIS FEET
ON THE TABLE.
COFFEE STAINS
ON HIS SHIRT.



MY FIRST
INTERVIEW WAS
WEIRD.

I WAS SHY
WHEN I CAME
HERE TO WORK.
I HAD MY RESUME
IN MY HANDS
AND STOOD IN
HIS OFFICE.

AND A GARBAGE
BASKET OVERFLOWING
WITH TISSUES.

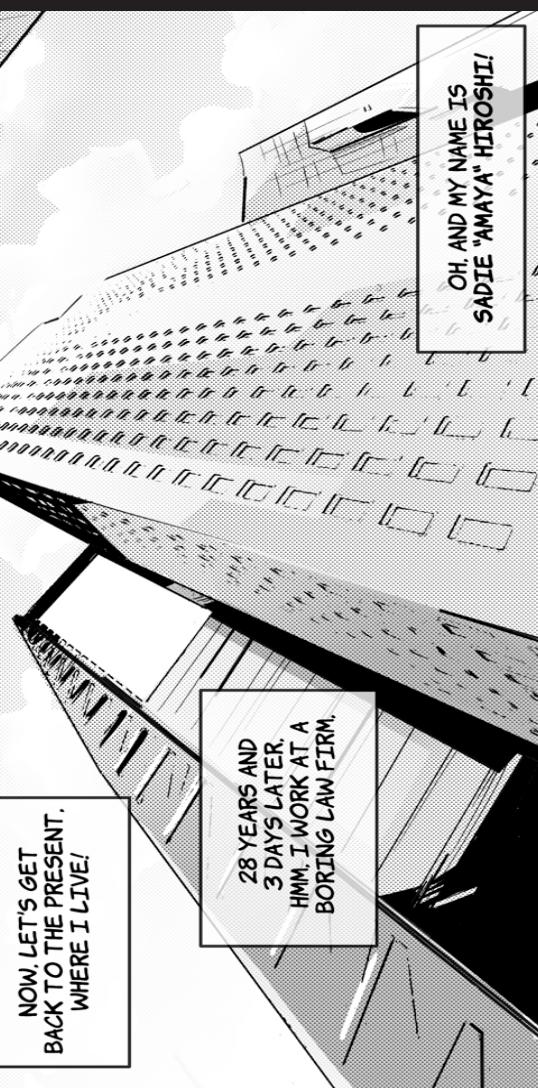
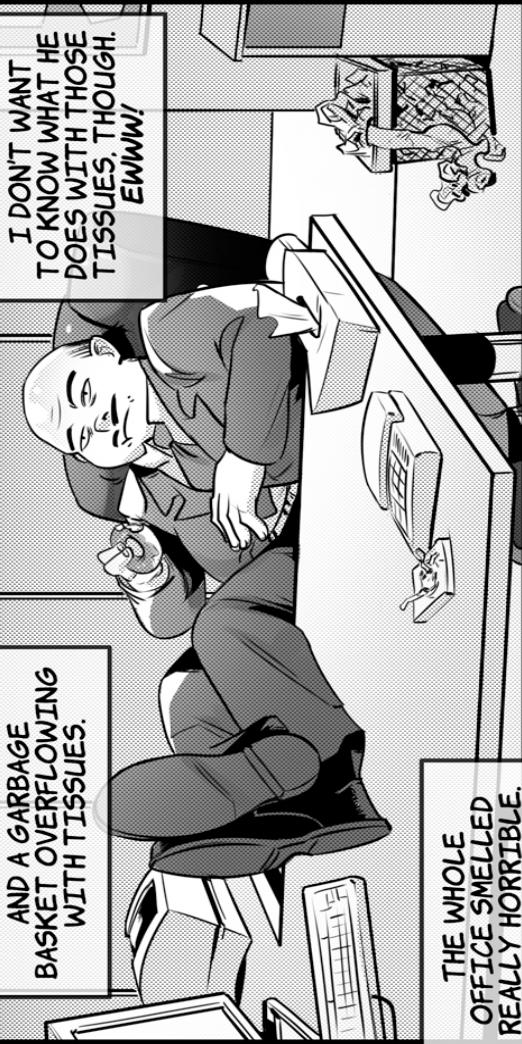
I DON'T WANT
TO KNOW WHAT HE
DOES WITH THOSE
TISSUES. THOUGH.
EWWWW!

THE WHOLE
OFFICE SMELLED
REALLY HORRIBLE.

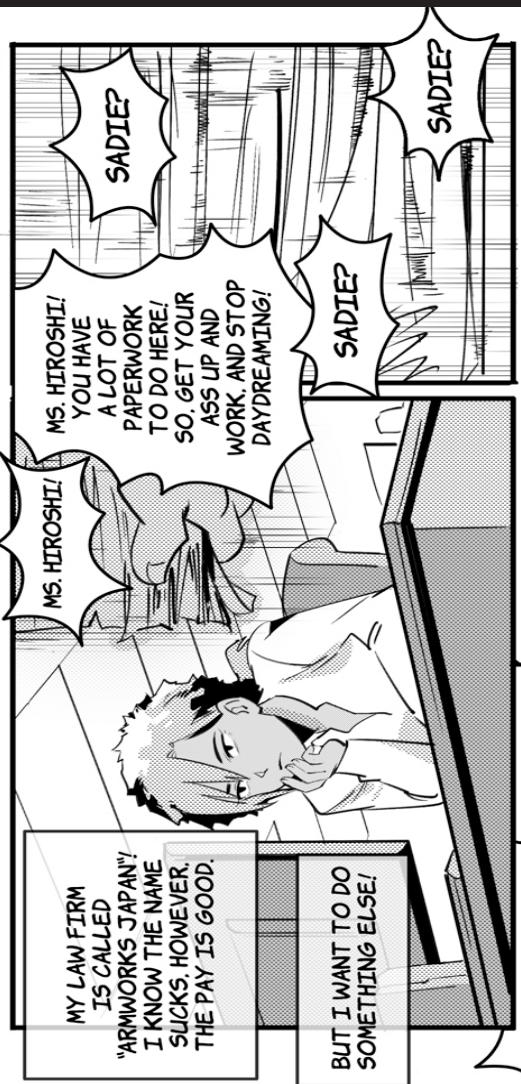
ANYWAY, I PLAYED
IT COOL AND
SMILED LIKE A
NICE LITTLE GIRL.

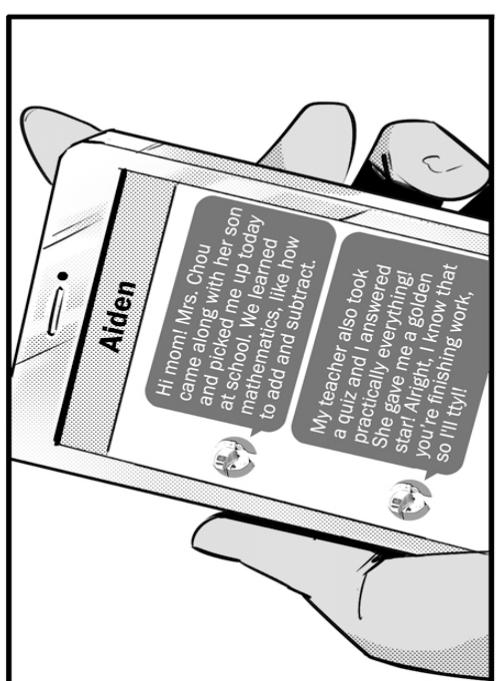
AND WITHOUT
HAVING SAID
A WORD...

F---
RIDICULOUS!
BUT HEY! AT
LEAST I GOT
THE JOB.



OH, AND MY NAME IS
SADIE "AMAYA" HIROSHI!



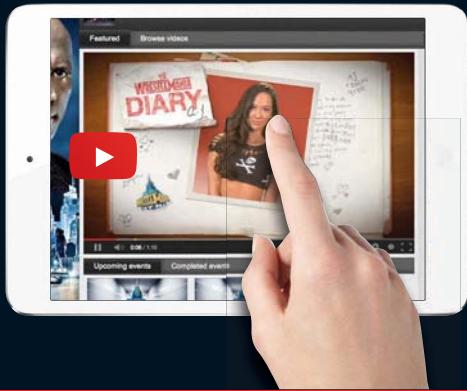




OH BOY- SHE PRONOUNCED IT AGAIN!



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HOW TO TRAIN YOUR SHINING DRAGON

As the *Shining* series makes its long-awaited return to the west, NEO's David West talks to producers Makoto Suzuki and James Kuroki about the myths and legends, bishonen boys, and the rampaging dragons of *Shining Resonance Refrain*.



Shine On

The games in the *Shining* series have taken many forms over the years. There have been turn-based dungeon crawlers like *Shining In The Darkness*, action RPGs like *Shining Wisdom*, and the tactical, strategy-based RPG *Shining Force*. The gameplay in *Shining Resonance Refrain* is comparable stylistically to the *Tales Of* series.

One thousand years ago, a terrible war was fought in the land of Alfheim that saw the great dragons apparently driven to extinction in the cataclysm known as Ragnarok. Now, conflict returns to Alfheim as the Kingdom of Astoria faces an invasion from the Empire of Lombardia.

Seeking every advantage, the Empire has assigned its most powerful holy warriors, the Beowulf, to track down and capture the soul of the most powerful of all the ancient dragons, the Shining Dragon, which resides within a naïve young man called Yuma Ilvern. Innocent in the ways of the world, never mind politics and war, Yuma's life will never be the same again, as he must fight for his very life and unleash the incredible power of the Shining Dragon that lies inside him, waiting to roar.

SEGA's *Shining* series started life in 1991 with *Shining In The Darkness*. *Shining Resonance* was released on the PlayStation 3 exclusively in Japan four years ago and now SEGA is updating and

remastering the game for current consoles and bringing the title to the west for the first time.

The story draws upon a wide range of inspirations, including Norse mythology – referenced in Ragnarok and Alfheim – and the epic poem *Beowulf*, which lends its name to the elite knights of Lombardia.

"As a series, *Shining* has released games of various genres, but for this title specifically, we wanted to have a structured story as a classic fantasy RPG, so we decided to use names from myths and legends," says Makoto Suzuki, producer at SEGA Japan. "On the surface, Beowulf sides with the Empire, and the fact that they are trying to defeat the dragon within Yuma does have parallels with the myth. However, after moving the story along and finding out his actual objective, you might realize the true meaning behind the name. There are a few things like this here and there in the game, so people who are well versed in myths and legends may be able to enjoy the game from a different angle."

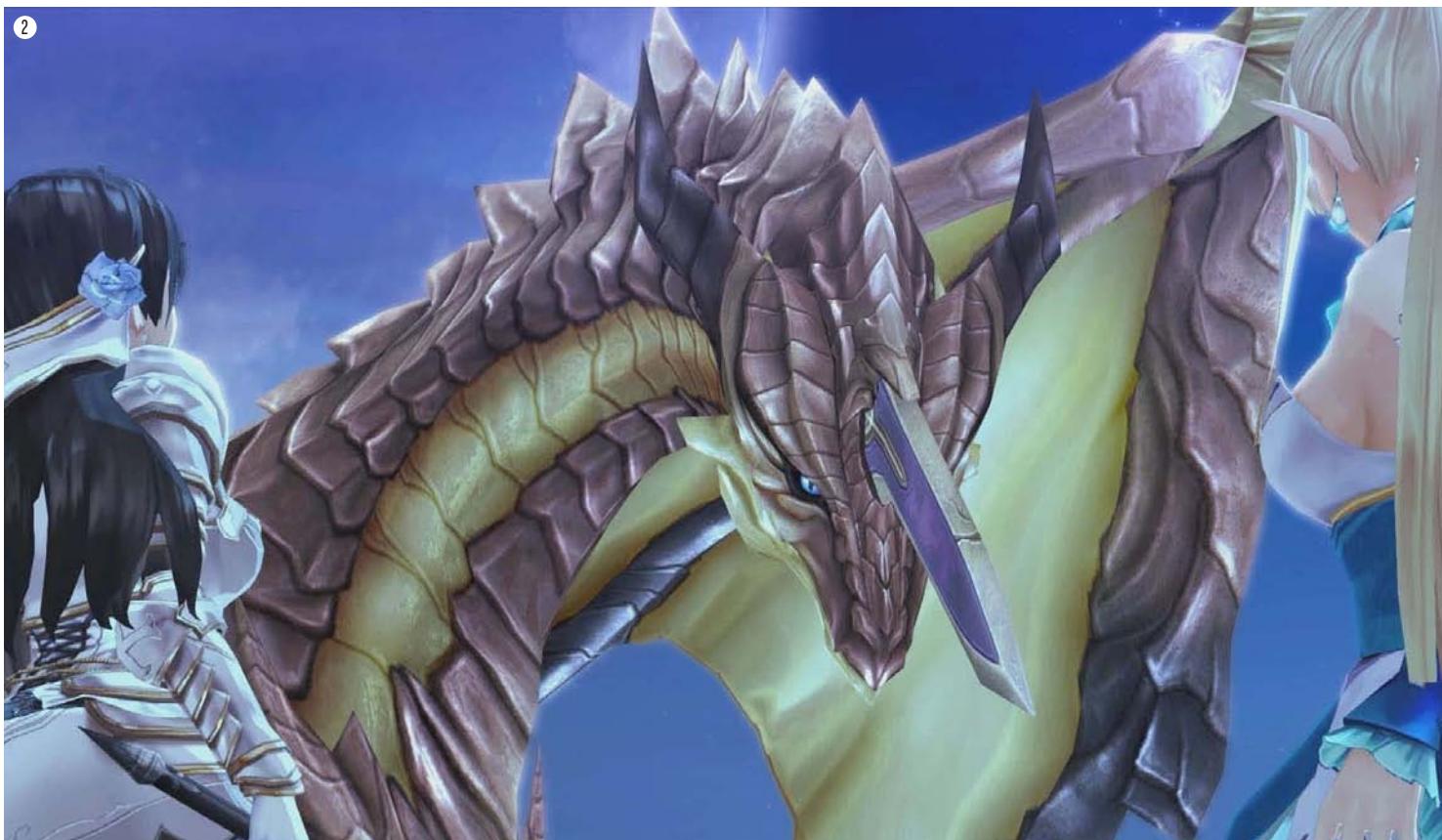
At the outset of the adventure, Yuma has been locked away by the Empire. Rescued from captivity by a group of Dragoneers – warriors who can draw upon the power of the dragons – Yuma must learn to use his own abilities and the Dragon Resonator Vandelhorn, a sword that channels the Shining Dragon's tremendous strength.

"As the story progresses, various dragons show up, but the dragon within Yuma is the strongest of them all that attempted to save the world," says Suzuki. "I thought, 'What type of person will this dragon choose?' I think that a compelling protagonist is one that grows along with you as the game goes on, and also one that can help those friends / peers that were there for the journey."

FRIENDS AND FOES

Yuma does not face his challenges alone. Sonia Blanche, the Lightning Princess, may be royalty, but she's a skilled





Healers And Damage Dealers

Unlike some of the turn-based titles in the franchise, the action in *Shining Resonance Refrain* unfolds in real-time. A successful Break Attack will leave enemies temporarily defenceless and open to a damaging Force Attack. It's not all about offence, players can command party members to serve as healers during battle.



swordswoman and the leader of the party that springs Yuma from the Empire's clutches. Kirika Towa Alma is a Diva Magica, a keeper of the Rune Songs and wielder of the Koto-no-Kagura, the Dragon Wing Bow. Rinna Mayfield is an Elvish Mage who carries Trumrod, the Dragon Tail Cudgel, and whose sweet exterior belies her love of pranks. Agnum Bulletheart is a fiery mage who smites enemies with Iglate, the Dragon Flame Staff, while Lestin Serra Alma is a knight from the Elvish kingdom of Wellant who controls ice magic and possesses Fengflaut, the Dragon Fang Spear.

Together, they must protect Yuma from the forces of the Empire, led by Excella Noa Aura who is both a Diva Magica and a Dragoneer, and the Black Wolf, Georg Zalbard, the Captain of Beowulf. Their Imperial squad includes the berserker Zest Graham, the insane occult scientist Joachim Reubens, the lithe Elvish ninja Beatrice Irma, and the mysterious Ette le Sheila, one of Joachim's strangest and deadliest creations. Finally, there's Jinas Aion, owner of the famed katana called Susano-o

that can slay a dragon with a single stroke, and whose loyalties and motivations remain a mystery.

It was vital for the creative team to ensure that the antagonists are just as colourful and captivating as the protagonists. "The Empire is not necessarily always an 'evil' entity, and has normal people living their lives," says Suzuki. "Excella is a noble princess who is well respected and trusted by these people of the Empire. Her actions to obtain Yuma's powers are because she loves her father and her people. Zest, the strongest warrior of the Empire, is also actually from the nobility of another country, but he was unable to protect it and now sides with the Empire in order to take revenge. Because of his background, Zest acknowledges the great power that is Yuma and challenges him to fight. I don't think we can have a story without these types of compelling characters."

Whether friends or foes, all the character designs are the work of Tony Taka, who has a long history on the franchise. "Some time passed from the retro *Shining* series on Genesis, Gamegear, >>>

1. I'd like to sing for you now a beautiful tune that's very close to my heart, it's called *I Have A Dragon Inside Me That Will Crush You*. 2. Is that a dragon in your pocket, or are you just pleased to see us? 3. She's a ninja, elf, and percussionist - Beatrice Irma is a triple threat.



The Dragon's Song

"The songs were created by the popular music team Elements Garden," says Suzuki. "For instance, each character's B.A.N.D. song is composed to link to the sounds of a music box that belonged to a girl that saved Yuma when he was young. The PS3 version soundtrack was released in 2015."

>>> and Sega Saturn, and when we decided to reboot the series, we worked with different character designers in order to create an all-new feel," says Suzuki. "Everyone we worked with had attractive designs to elevate the series, but we worked with Tony on multiple titles, beginning with *Tears* [*Shining Tears*, released 2004]. Regarding the character designs, we would come up with a concept, such as 'a woman wearing dragon armour', and from there let Tony take the wheel and have his creativity run wild."

There's a strong bishonen angle to many of the cast, particularly Ette le Sheila. Asked if the pretty boys in the game, like Ette, are there to entice female fans, Suzuki replies, "There are some secrets revealed about Ette as you play through the game, so I won't say much, but we do get huge amount of feedback from female fans who play the game largely because of attractive male characters. I was at the SEGA booth at Taipei Game Show in January, and directly spoke to a fan who asked, 'Please give Agnum a bigger role!' I'm really grateful."

THE DRAGON'S ROAR

In the heat of battle, Yuma can transform into the Shining Dragon, which makes him a very dangerous young man, but it is not a choice to be made lightly or in circumstances that are less than dire.

"His dragon form is very powerful," says James Kuroki, producer from SEGA of America, "but comes at the risk of Yuma losing control. When the dragon goes berserk, he will attack anyone and everyone, including your own allies. It is a risky gamble, but the payoff is high."

In combat, dishing out standard attacks lowers a character's AP – Action Points – while Force attacks deplete

MP – Magic Points – instead. Both will recover given time, so it's vital not to overcommit to your offence while neglecting defence. One goal for the creators was to make sure that the gameplay is always challenging and that every battle isn't won simply by having Yuma unleash the Shining Dragon.

"It is balanced so that if we were to look at pure attack capabilities, the Shining Dragon is able to crush some relatively high-level opponents," says Suzuki. "However, it heavily consumes MP and also has a high risk of losing control, making it dangerous to use in every battle. You're better off saving the Shining Dragon for critical moments in battle, and I think that balances things out."

GOING FOR A SONG

The role-playing side of the game comes into play as characters level up and gain new skills, which tie in to the music. Players control a party of characters and the B.A.N.D. System determines how they work together during battles. Music links the Dragoneers to the power of the dragons and their weapons double as instruments. Successfully scoring hits on enemies will charge the Battle Performance Mana, enabling the party to perform a Rune Song together. Performing a Rune Song requires one member of the party to act as bandleader, and some characters even have special costumes just for the occasion.

These musical numbers aren't merely fabulous but can have a variety of beneficial effects depending on who is leading the session, such as increasing the damage inflicted by Force abilities.

"The way to learn more Force abilities is to level up," says Kuroki. "You can only have four Force abilities accessible at a time, so you will be swapping them out depending on the enemy



"[A] GREAT UPGRADE IS THE INCLUSION OF ALL DLC FROM THE PS3 VERSION. THE PS3 VERSION HAD OVER 150 DLC, INCLUDING NEW EVENTS AND COSTUMES. AND, OF COURSE, THE NEW *REFRAIN MODE* IS A MAJOR ADDITION TO THE GAME, THOUGH TO OUR WESTERN AUDIENCE THE ENTIRE GAME IS BRAND NEW." **JAMES KUROKI**

and who is fighting alongside you. But there are also customizing elements. You can choose your Tuning for each character, which will change their playstyle. For example, you can choose whether you want your character to have a speedier style of fighting or a slower, more powerful one. Aspect Pieces also allow you to add bonus effects to your characters."

Yuma and his comrades have a big world to explore, but the game is story-based rather than employing an open world format. "Your party has a central base of operations, Astoria, and from there will travel to different parts of the world. The farther from Astoria you travel, the more perilous it gets," says Kuroki.

When they're not fighting monsters and smiting foes, the party members can get to know each other better. In addition to their combat skills, characters possess Traits that reveal their personalities and determine how they interact. Relationships between the team are shown on the Bond Diagram, and different bonds will change how they work together in battle, unlocking new abilities. If the party visits a city or camp, that

can lead to a Night Event in which two characters hang out together, allowing them to increase their connection and possibly resulting in the pair going on a Date.

"Spending time with friends, like real life, is a great way to get to know them," says Kuroki. "You will be able to see sides of them that otherwise would never be known. It really makes the characters likeable and gives players a chance to take a break from all the action."

TESTING THE WATERS

In making the jump from the PlayStation 3 to current gen consoles, Kuroki says the biggest and most obvious development in *Shining Resonance Refrain* is the enhanced graphics. "The graphics now display natively in 1080p with a higher but steady framerate," he explains. "Having played both versions, the difference is immediately noticeable. Another great upgrade is the inclusion of all DLC from the PS3 version. The PS3 version had over 150 DLC, including >>>

4. The dashing and flame-haired Agnum Bulletheart, as requested by a fan in Taipei!
5. Ladies, meet Lestin Serra Alma. He's looking for a girl who loves ice magic and playing on his Fengflaut, the Dragon Fang Spear. 6. The impromptu jam in the town square swiftly resulted in an ASBO for Agnum and Rinna.

A New Perspective

Refrain Mode lets players experience the story from the perspective of Excella and Jinas, revealing hitherto unseen facets of Yuma's adventure. "Both characters are with Yuma from the beginning," says Kuroki. "Story-wise, this is contradicting, and yet no one seems to doubt their presence. There is a secret to that..."



"THERE ARE SOME SECRETS REVEALED ABOUT ETTE AS YOU PLAY THROUGH THE GAME, SO I WON'T SAY MUCH, BUT WE DO GET HUGE AMOUNT OF FEEDBACK FROM FEMALE FANS WHO PLAY THE GAME LARGELY BECAUSE OF ATTRACTIVE MALE CHARACTERS."

MAKOTO SUZUKI

>>> new events and costumes. And, of course, the new *Refrain Mode* is a major addition to the game, though to our western audience the entire game is brand new."

Given that the *Shining* franchise started life in 1991 and that recent titles have only been available in Japan, Kuroki is curious to get a sense of the modern fanbase outside Japan. "This is a bit of a test for us as well, to see who our audience is," he says. "It has been a good ten years since the last *Shining* instalment in the west, and even with the unreleased games, gameplay varied dramatically, so I understand that the series may have fallen off the radar for many. But whether they are old fans or new, I feel that *Shining Resonance*

Refrain is the perfect game to reintroduce the series to the world."

"I really appreciate all our fans who have supported and loved *Shining* since the Genesis days," adds Suzuki. "There has been a large gap since the last *Shining* game has been released in the west, so I would expect that there are many people who have not played the games. I hope that this title will pave the way in creating an environment where people can learn and enjoy the current *Shining* worldwide. The 30th anniversary is near, and I hope that everyone will stay tuned for what's to come!"

Train your inner dragon with *Shining Resonance Refrain*, out on PlayStation 4, Nintendo Switch, Xbox One and PC from SEGA. ●



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